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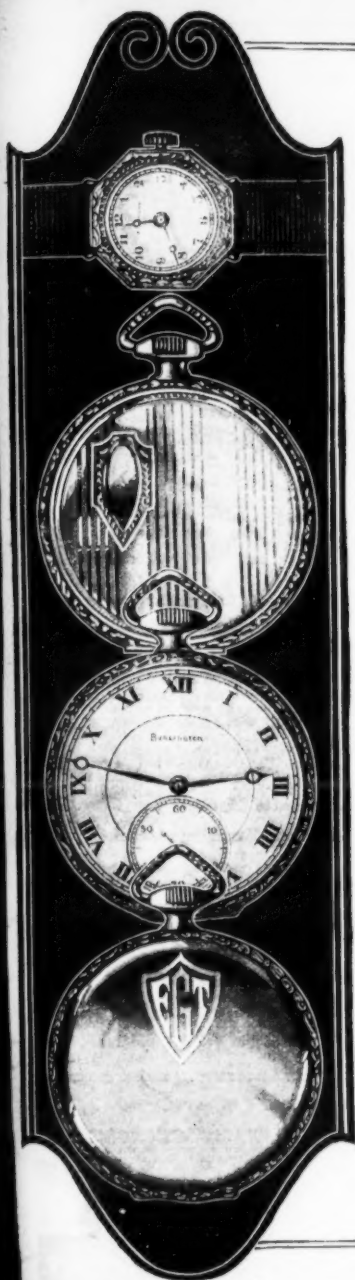
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November
1922

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Vol. L
No. 3

CONTENTS

THE TORCH OF THE WOMEN.	Charles Saxby and Richard Masten	1
Complete Novelette A modern, feminine <i>Cœur de Lion</i> was Vera Lawrence, who held high the Torch of the Women as they battled with the sterner sex for more than "rights," kindling fires they could not quench.		
BOOMERANGS COME HOME TO ROOST.	Nina Wilcox Putnam	47
Short Story. The tribulations of a modern debutante are amusingly told in this clever little tale of the uprising generation.		
THE LEFT HAND OF LUCK.	Winston Bouvé	64
Short Story Six months after her husband's death beautiful Lucinda Morley found herself in Shanghai, quite friendless, except for one man who was entangled with her in the amazing web that a small jade hand—the Left Hand of Luck—had spun.		
THE CIRCUIT.	Charles Wharton Stork	78
Verse		
MADAME STAMINOV.	Ernest L. Starr	79
Short Story It was the premier's wife who was responsible for his popularity, but when he discovered that she had married him at the king's command, loving another, he forgot that he was premier and became a maddened Samson, believing himself betrayed by another Delilah.		
THE KINGMAKERS.	Burton E. Stevenson	94
Serial The final installment of this most delightful serial.		
THE STATUETTE.	Rae Allen	125
Verse		
A PORTRAIT OF MISS X.	Arthur Tuckerman	126
Short Story For six long, weary years Eli Cornwall had been trying to forget the tragedy of his life; sometimes he did forget—for an hour or so. But when he saw the face of his beloved smiling at him, miraculously, from the tranquil surface of the sea he found peace at last.		
KINGS OF HEARTS.	Anice Terhune	134
Series Beau Brummel: "The Last of the Dandies."		
SO DANTE'S BEATRICE.	Jeannette Marks	139
Verse		
THE GIRL WHO DIED.	Augusta Coxé Sanderson	140
Short Story When Billy Matthews, American, was picked up in London by two women, who apparently knew him, but whom he did not know, he embarked upon an amazing adventure.		
THE LOVE GUARD.	Freeman Harrison	152
Short Story Two men loved Jean Chrystie—a poet and a business man—and the girl, who cared for both, at last had to make her choice. But in the end it was another woman, a stranger, who influenced her decision.		
A MODERN LOVE SONG.	Grace Hazard Conkling	155
Verse		
IN BROADWAY PLAYHOUSES	Dorothy Parker	156
TALKS WITH AINSLEE'S READERS The Editor		

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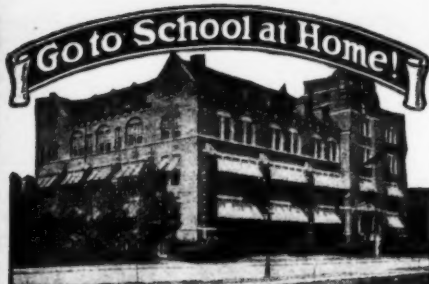
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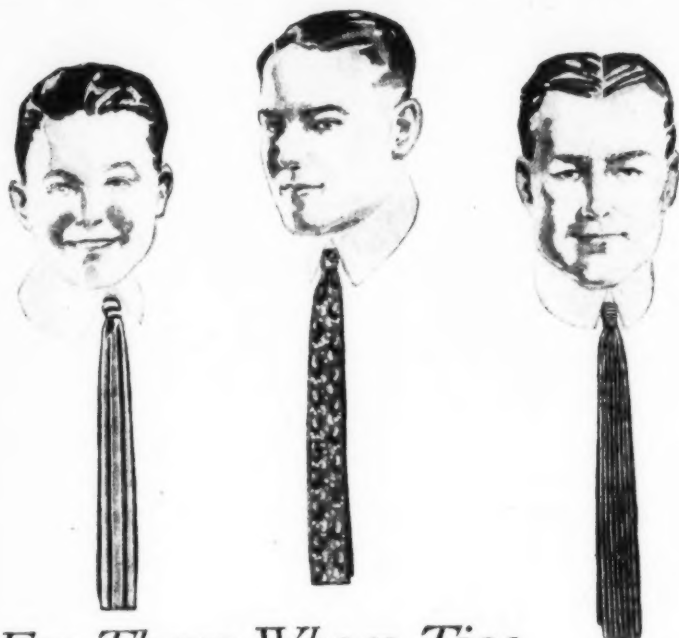
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The Torch of the Women

By Charles Saxby and
Richard Masten

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH the opened windows a patter of soft rain mingled with the sounds of the city all about them. Drifting in with it came those odors of early summer which even Manhattan, very fortress of artifice though it be, cannot entirely bar.

To Weldon it brought the luxurious ease of the wanderer returned and he breathed in delight, increasing the pressure on the slim hands within his own. With the passion of the lover for perfection he scanned the face so closely opposite his. In the tinted dusk of the lamps it showed clear-cut as a cameo, lit by eyes that just then were pools of dark tenderness. With Vera it was her distinction, rather than her beauty, that first struck one; the indefinable print of race, together with a dynamic something that even in her quiescence one divined within her.

In a rush of satisfaction Weldon raised the hands to his lips, kissing the fingers one by one.

"You can't think what it means," he sighed, "to be back again—with you—wth you."

Unresistingly the hands remained in his. Lying back against the cushions

she gave a sense of rest, such as might be deliberately snatched at between moments of intense activity. Those activities still hung in her atmosphere, to be felt, if not seen, and it was with a half jealousy of their weeks of separation that he spoke.

"But what of you? What have you been doing these three months? You keep me talking of myself and deny me a word of what I am most interested in—you—you—you."

She sat up, her half-closed lids opening suddenly.

"I? Oh, nothing—nothing to speak of, as yet. Let me first have this time with you, Bobbie. Tell me about it all again; that ranch—it sounds so peaceful. I can almost see it as you speak, with the orange trees and the sea blue between great oaks."

"Of course, the house isn't much," he went on with a lover's disparagement of his own belongings. "But back of it the mountains go up, bronze and purple against the sky, and the scent of the orange flowers drifts in in great clouds."

He talked on, painting his word picture with unconscious skill, the faint, steady tap-tap of a typewriter in the

next room like a running accompaniment to his voice. Gradually the slight strain left Vera's face as she listened.

"It sounds so splendid and—oh, so quiet," she sighed.

"And now, Vera, when shall we go?" he demanded. "If I am to start the ranch this year it should be soon and I don't go back without you. Think of it—you—on that high-hung mesa between the Santa Ynez and the Pacific. No matter how crazy the world is, we can let it go, once we are up there. Just dream on and let this strike-mad affair glide by without touching us! So say when it shall be, Vera."

She withdrew her hands at that, pressing them to her forehead, as if reminding herself of other things, and her next words came in complete contrast to his speech, as she gazed at the silken lamps.

"They are threatening to shut down the power houses to-morrow."

"What!" he cried.

"Didn't you know? But then, you have been so long away. Things have gone from bad to worse. New York is almost in the condition of Petrograd in the early days of the revolution. And now—the lights——" She broke off with a shiver. "Think of it—this city, plunged in darkness."

"All the more reason for you to go," he declared. "Come away to-morrow, while there are yet trains."

"Would you have me desert my post in time of danger?"

"Are you then an official of the responsible government?"

"The government"—Vera made a gesture of half appallment—"it almost seems as if there were none. Perhaps you haven't heard that even the water is threatened by the general strike?"

Weldon glanced at the window in perplexity. Winking arc lights, the hum of traffic, and the faint hoots from the sirens on the Hudson; New York, in

all that familiar arrogance—that was so seemingly unshakeable!

"But there is nothing of this in the papers," he objected.

"They are censored," she answered.

Weldon walked to the window and looked down on the street, remembering the signs that, on his dash uptown from the station, had obtruded themselves even through his loverlike eagerness to reach Vera—signs slight in themselves, but piling up in sinister significance: the extraordinary difficulties that seemed to surround the most usual transactions; infrequent street cars, packed with humanity, clinging like flies even to the roofs, throngs of faces all alike in a furtive harassment; groups of men discussing in hushed tones, and through it all a desperate sort of gayety, as of those clutching at a last good time, in fear of the morrow.

"I am going to take you out of here at once," he declared.

"Would you have me run from danger?" she chided.

"All I care for is your safety," he returned. "I fought through a year of hell because they told us it was to save the world. And now, if the world won't be saved—what do I care for New York?" he burst out. "A great Frankenstein sort of monster of artifice that they have reared! A place like this is a perpetual danger, and now, if its pillars of Philistia are cracking——"

"It is the women who will suffer the most," Vera put in.

"That is exactly why I propose to take you away."

She considered him as he stood there, still with his Western tan upon him, instinct with the early maturity of the later twenties. A desire for surrender was upon her in that moment, a longing to be taken up and away by strong arms to some place of safety. Those arms were even then about her and his voice in her ears.

"Vera—come away!"

How far that longing might have carried her she never knew. She was realizing, for the first time, how tired she was and how enormous was the task to which, unknown to him, she was setting her face. Fragile in the daintiness she had donned to receive him, Vera relaxed in his embrace, held by the vibrancy of his voice.

Then a tap on the door arrested her, and before it could open the two had perforce become merely a couple standing in friendly converse. Vera's smile flashed out at the girl who entered.

"Come in, Miss Haight. I believe you have met Mr. Weldon."

Of course, Elsie Haight, Vera's secretary, Weldon rapidly remembered. A pretty little thing, in an impertinent, elusive sort of way, as she stood there with her hands full of typewritten sheets. Everything about her was rather elusive, he recollected; she was always appearing in just that manner, standing in a doorway or passing fugitively through a room, like some rather boyish little bird in plumage of soft grays and blues.

"Pardon me if I interrupt, Miss Lawrence," she was saying. "But it is eight o'clock."

"So late!" Vera exclaimed in dismay. "Oh, thank you; I shall hardly have time to change and get to the Opera House."

"The opera—still going on in June?" Weldon asked. "Surely, Vera, you are not going out this evening?"

"I am so sorry, Bobbie," she answered. "But it is not the opera and I must go, for I am scheduled to speak."

"Oh, one of your meetings," he nodded, in a tolerance of fancied understanding. "Something important, if you have taken the Opera House. What is it—factory girl's uplift?"

He surprised a glance between the two women, the involuntary exchange of a mutual knowledge that seemed to

relegate him to the outside. Then Vera spoke, going to the door.

"If you will come with me, you will see. I must change now. I can hardly address a meeting—at least, not such a meeting as this, in this gay affair."

An instant as he closed the door behind her; a look of longing that she flung him, but which had in it something that was almost farewell.

"Can't you cut it?" he pleaded. "My first evening!"

"I would if I could, but you yourself said it, Bobbie," she answered. "The pillars of Philistia are cracking, and we women have some concern as to the direction in which they fall."

There was distaste in his gaze as he turned back to Miss Haight, who still stood there, folding her papers; it was curious how the girl's coming seemed to have changed things.

"I was so sorry to interrupt," she said, as if she caught his feelings. "But Miss Lawrence would never have forgiven me had I not reminded her." Her glance followed to the door through which Vera had disappeared. "Is she not wonderful these days?"

"Miss Lawrence is always wonderful," said Weldon coldly.

Her head, its bobbed hair unusually fluffy for that of a competent and high-priced secretary, bowed to the rebuke.

"Of course; but especially just now. There have been developments while you were away from New York, Mr. Weldon."

"What kind of developments?"

"Oh, nothing new, really," she shrugged. "I sometimes wonder if there is anything new under the sun. Customs and fashions may alter, but men and women go on just the same—and all this was really thought in Athens of old."

"You are talking riddles to me," Weldon said.

"Oh, well, women are official Sphinxes," she laughed.

"But the Sphinx keeps it secret," he retorted, and she nodded in gay impertinence, turning back to the doorway which she had hardly left.

"Then, to sustain my reputation as one, I had better go."

"Am I as dangerous to secrets as all that?" he asked.

It was only a turned head, an over-the-shoulder glance, alive with mockery, that she vouchsafed him.

"Poor Sphinx, think of her sitting dumbly on her sands for five thousand years—waiting for a man who can find her out."

Her last words carried her beyond his sight; that was Elsie Haight all over, he reflected. Always just going, and always with some challenge, then completely gone before one could summon a riposte.

It was a silent Vera who rode with him in the car that awaited her outside. Noting his curiosity at its sober luxury she spoke.

"This is one that Mrs. Malmont has placed at my disposal."

"Mrs. Bartholomew Malmont?" he echoed. "Are you taking a flyer in high society?"

"When we are all alike on the brink, those artificial distinctions hardly hold."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"If it were not we should hardly be contemplating——"

She stopped and, though he held her gloved hand, he had the sense of her being off where he could not reach her. She might have been looking out over things from some height which he had not reached.

She did not speak again and it was a still-mystified Weldon who handed her out at the stage door of the great Opera House. The preliminaries seemed already under way; standing behind the set that masked the stage, he could feel the jarring magnetisms streaming in from the packed auditorium. In the throng at the wings were a score of

faces known to him personally or through the persistent publicity of their photographs. Women everywhere: Mrs. Malmont, Mrs. Morgenthau, half a hundred more, plainly dressed, none of them beauties, but each commanding instant attention by the atmosphere of authority that hung about her.

Men, their figures melting and moving in the shadows punctured by shafts of light from the stage. A strangely sober and solid throng for such a place; business, politics, and power invading the temple of the arts and bundling the Muses unceremoniously into retreat. Surely that was Haldane Harper, just returned from upholding, almost with his bare hands, the social structure of half of war-ruined Europe. And that face behind him, of a half-shrewd, half-idealistic asceticism, could be none other than Charles Gard, the great rubber manufacturer and prophet of peace.

It was Harper who first spoke to Weldon, as a shift of the hushed throng brought them together.

"Surely I know you!" he exclaimed, with a stare of attempted recognition. "No—don't tell me; I dislike to forget a name. We met somewhere, and the meeting was an important one, in some way. I have it now. You piloted the plane in which I went from Trieste to Vienna just after the armistice."

"You certainly have a memory, sir," Weldon answered, as there flashed across his memory that tempestuous dash in order that Harper's reassuring presence might steady the panicky city.

"Perhaps you do not realize what a service you performed in getting me to the Kaiserstadt so quickly. Two days more——" Harper broke off with a shrug of his solid shoulders. "We seem fated to meet in troublous times, Captain Weldon."

"Is there to be trouble to-night, then?"

"The mere occasion for the meeting is surely trouble enough."

"I have been away for several months," Weldon explained. "I am only here as escort to one of the speakers—Miss Lawrence."

"You know Miss Lawrence?"

"I have the honor to be engaged to her."

Harper's glance was more than curious now; it held penetration in its quick survey.

"I congratulate you," he nodded, then went on, more detachedly, "Miss Lawrence, I understand, is the very head and front of this woman's movement."

"Is it at all a serious affair?" Weldon asked.

"So serious in its possibilities that I was forced to return from Europe with my work there only half completed."

"And you are now——" Weldon began.

"Like yourself, standing here in the wings and wondering what on earth it is all really about."

A certain grimness had settled over Harper's smooth countenance and back of it Weldon caught a hint of hidden things; America was calling in her great men to help uphold her in some stress near at hand. He would have spoken again, but Harper motioned him to silence; the speakers were already filing out upon the glowing strip before the footlights.

Their words were largely lost where Weldon stood, the voices going directly out into the unseen immensity of the auditorium, from whence came patterings of applause, laughter, or rumbling antagonism. Women—women—women, such seemed the burden of it all as one after another rose. Poised creatures, speaking with cool authority of organization, rights, and efficiency, while back of them sat Charles Gard, Andreas Czerny, the wizard of the oil fields, and half a dozen others of the more insurgent great fortunes of the country.

With a silent concentration Harper watched it all, and Weldon caught his murmur.

"All the prestige of those women's names, and at least a thousand millions to back them! They might be able to do it—provided they can get something else—a rallying point, all fire and enthusiasm—a sort of New York Joan of Arc, if they can but find her."

As if in answer to his words Vera was stepping forward from her seat in response to the chairwoman's introduction. With perfect poise she faced the audience; a thing of marble, she looked, palely cool; then came the miracle of that marble warming to life.

Whether by accident, or for Weldon's sake, she had taken her stand well back from the footlights and much of her speech came floating sidewise to the wings. It was little more than a repetition of all that the others had said—each one had played upon the same strings—but with Vera it was as if those strings, for the first time, vibrated with a real human voice.

"—and now they are threatening us with a general strike."

So her words came, drifting back to him in gusts of passionate intensity.

"They say that, in two weeks, not a wheel will be turning from Seattle to Palm Beach. I ask you, who is it that bears the real burden of all this? For years we women worked and waited, giving our brothers, our lovers, our husbands, and our sons, that war might be swept from the world and all made new."

She had to pause there, bracing herself against the mixed tumult evoked by her words. As if quieted for an instant, she seized her opportunity and gradually her voice stilled the audience again.

"Now the strike—who is it that bears the burden of that? Women and children, ground between the millstones of government and anarchy! A general

strike—shall we not take part in it then? I tell you that the time has come for the women and children to withdraw, and unless our terms are accepted and carried out it will be done. For months we have been organizing secretly and there is not a woman in this theater, nor in this city, who is not acquainted with our plans. The military lessons that we learned in the war have been turned against the militarists and the tricks taught us by the strikers we shall use in our turn. Stop your wheels if you wish to, destroy the harvests and break the looms—we are prepared!"

She stopped, holding the huge house in silence, as visibly, in her concentration, there blazed up in her a white fire of exaltation. Across the stage, in the gloom of the opposite wing, Weldon caught the outlines of men's faces; members of the city administration; a bull-dog countenance, all pugnacious power, which he recognized as that of a labor leader; the aquiline profile of a foreign ambassador, faintly amused at this spectacle of America's internal writhings.

At his side he caught Harper's murmur, wrung from him in reluctant admiration.

"The stuff of martyrs—that girl is a national danger at such a time as this!"

Then, like a leap of flame, that inner exaltation burst forth in Vera's voice.

"A torch—that is what I uphold here to-night. The Torch of the Women, refusing further to be ground in your mills of strife. Run or ruin your world as you please, but we, oh, men—we women withdraw. A Crusade, that is what I preach. A Crusade of Withdrawal. A crusade that we practice for your own sakes, for it is our burden, as it is also our glory, that despite all your mistakes, all the crushing loads you heap upon us—in spite of it all, each to each, we love you!"

"For your sakes, not for our own, and above all, for the sakes of the chil-

dren we have borne and are to bear—for the sakes of those to come! Without us you can do nothing, without our support your wars, your strikes, your antagonisms, cannot stand; and so—we withdraw.

"I swear to you that unless you bring internal peace, and quickly, that in seven days there will not be woman nor a child under twelve left in all this island of Manhattan."

A roar, like the unleashing of a hurricane, and under it Vera trembled as might a leaf caught in a gale. A great gust of passion both for and against, and like *débris* swept forward by the flood of their sound, the front ranks broke and were already clambering over the orchestra pit, swamping the press tables in their rush for the stage.

As though he had expected some such dénouement, Harper turned with an authoritative shout to the flies.

"The fire curtain, quick!"

The fabric of asbestos and steel wire shot downward, shutting in the stage and its comparative quiet. Harper spoke swiftly to Weldon.

"You say you are Miss Lawrence's escort? Then get her out of here, at once!"

He paused, his glance taking in a group of well-known figures of the City Hall administration, who were already consulting apart.

"If you take my advice you will see to it that Miss Lawrence does not return to her own house to-night—nor to any place where her presence might be suspected."

CHAPTER II.

Weldon did not wait to hear more. Around him in the whispered consultations, in the excited grouping of women, he could see corroboration of Harper's words. With the quickness of the trained aviator he sprang forward, his mind filled with but one idea, the safety of Vera. To where she stood, a little

piqued by the sudden descent of the curtain, cutting off as it had both her triumph and her danger, he darted. He seized her by the arm with a grip that roused her to the realization that action was now the all-important thing.

"Quick!" he cried. "The stage door! There isn't a moment to spare."

It was the first time he had ever spoken to Vera in that tone of authority. It was the voice of the man who, amid the turmoil and ruin of a heavy bombardment of the airdromes on the Pieve, had spurred his men to superhuman efforts.

Vera understood. No one could have mistaken the menace in that growl out beyond the curtain. Vera's torch had indeed started a conflagration which swept on like a huge forest fire beyond control. And the others, these big figures in American social and economic life, were also roused to action by Weldon's quick movement.

"Hurry," called Mrs. Malmont, as Weldon and Vera started for the street.

The limousine was standing at the curb, its driver dozing over the wheel. Behind them the huge bulk of the Opera House was humming like a hive of disturbed bees. But what Weldon feared most, in the light of Harper's words, were those more solitary wasps of secret service and police. He opened the door, hastily handed Vera in, and entered.

"Home," he said, "quick."

The driver started the engine and pulled slowly from the curb. As the car gained momentum Weldon, looking back, saw several figures dart around the corner. One pointed after the limousine and then all piled into a squat black touring car. They were evidently the pursuers he had foreseen.

At the corner there was a momentary block of traffic. Weldon, his mind working overtime, opened the door opposite the one he and Vera had entered. In an instant he had alighted and whisked her out, drawing her into the

concealment offered by a parked car. The limousine went on and a moment later the black car flashed by in pursuit.

A great sense of relief passed through Weldon as the touring car dwindled into obscurity down the street. Vera was clutching his arm tightly. Slowly as she, too, became calm, her grip relaxed.

"Who were they?" she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Police," he said, "or what not. They've gone anyhow. Now let's go where we can talk this thing over. Your own apartments and those of your amazon friends will not be safe for you to-night. Where can I take you where you won't be suspected?"

"Why not Mrs. Malmont's?" she suggested.

"The first place they would look for you. You don't realize what you have started."

"A hotel," Vera ventured tentatively, but he shook his head.

A strange position for her, he thought, as he looked at her standing there; she had sprung into such prominence that it seemed that in all New York there was hardly a place in which she could escape notice.

"I must get you off the streets as quickly as possible, and the best thing I can see is for you to come to my rooms for an hour. Then we can decide what you will do."

In the district about Fifty-ninth Street and Central Park West one finds rows of once-exclusive brownstone fronts that have descended in the social scale to flats and apartments. It was on the third floor of one of these that Weldon had been established since long before the war.

Their taxi had not been followed, Weldon assured himself, and no one was in sight on the street as he thrust his latchkey into the door. It was with a sigh of nervous weariness that Vera sank into one of the deep armchairs,

the reaction from her speech, its reception, and the hurried flight afterward already upon her. Noting her pallor, Weldon hastily poured a glass of wine, handing it to her in the manner of a sternly kind physician. Back of that manner his mind was a riot of emotion rigorously repressed as he saw how near to breaking she was after the stress of the Opera House.

"Drink this," he said. "Then we can decide what you are to do."

As she took the glass her eyes, looking up into his, thanked him.

"Dear old Bobby," she murmured, "you're so good to me!"

She sipped her wine slowly. To Weldon it was a privilege to be able to watch her quietly regaining strength, to realize that when she had needed him he had not failed her.

"Now, little girl," he replied, "you've done your part. From now on you'll be watched, and if you try to do more, Heaven knows what will happen to you! Let's give it up. Let me take you back with me to Todos Santos where there will be just you and I forever in the sunlight and the breeze."

"Don't, Bobby," she begged. "You know I wouldn't do it. You saw what happened to-night. I am needed. Around me they will rally and we shall win. Oh, Bobby, we *shall* win!"

"But, Vera," he asked, "how in the world can you carry out those wild threats you made to-night?"

"I'll tell you all about it, but first let me telephone home. Elsie will know if anything further has developed."

She rose and went to the telephone which stood on Weldon's desk among the clutter of letters and invitations which had accumulated during his absence.

"Morningside four one five six." That number had always thrilled Weldon, but to-night it depressed him. Always before it had meant a talk with Vera, an inspiration, a delight, but to-

night it was the link that connected her with that mad scheme which meant danger for her and might rob him of her for Heaven only knew how long.

"Hello. Miss Haight? This is Miss Lawrence. Oh, at Mr. Weldon's. Yes. You know the number. Yes, that's it, Central Park West. Have you heard from Mrs. Malmont? At once, you say. Good! She'll call for me? Let her know where I am, then. Fine! The Redding camp is ready for me, you say? Good! All right. Good-by."

When she had hung up the receiver and turned again to Weldon, she was once more the Vera who had dominated the huge audience of the evening. Her dark eyes were flashing, her whole being was aquiver with the same enthusiasm that had swayed the listening thousands.

"It begins at once!" she cried.

"But Vera," he protested, feeling deep within him a sense of rebellion, "what you propose is impossible!"

"Don't, Bobby." She wandered about the room, fingering unconsciously the quaint relics that he had brought from his travels, putting down one and taking up another without even seeing them.

"We're ready. You think us disorganized fanatics. Oh, you men, you blind men! For months we have been preparing that we might save you. Day after day new buildings have sprung up on the estates of the women who have rallied to your rescue. Up the Hudson, in Jersey, in the Connecticut hills. You know the estate of Luke Trice, the humorist, at Redding? That is to be my headquarters. We are prepared to house five thousand there. Mrs. Malmont's estate, Mrs. Price's, and scores more are ready. We have been buying the government supplies *sub rosa*. Cantonments have been moved bodily. We are using the blindness of the government to help its weakness!"

She moved about nervously, picking

up the tennis trophy which he had won at Amherst, weighing it unseeingly, and laying it down.

"You think we can't do it. Manhattan will be empty of women in a week's time. Thousands are ready to go now."

"More will come in," suggested Weldon.

"What woman with respect for her name will dare enter a womanless city?" She seemed to be talking to the copy of an old master which hung above Weldon's fireplace. "When all the best people are gone, what woman will dare to remain? Oh, we are using our own weaknesses as the source of our own strength. 'The sheep of fashion' some one has called us. Now we are being our own herders. And the movement will spread. Manhattan first, then who knows how much more if you do not first give in?"

Her glance fell on a photograph upon the mantel, a woman of that exotic Parisianism which only those of Slavic temperament seem able to achieve—lithe, arrogantly *outré*, with something of the strange, almost morbid beauty of a tropical orchid. Vera's gaze, hitherto abstracted, became suddenly and intensely present as she looked.

"Who is this?" she asked. "Surely it can't be Tsarskaya."

"You recognize her?" he laughed. "That's a very rare photograph. That cartouche in the corner is her intimate signature."

"Oh, you know her?"

Weldon found himself strangely hesitant, not from any reluctance to admit his acquaintance with the dancer whose beauty, grace, notoriety, and extraordinary extravagance of life had made her the sensation of five capitals. Not even to himself would he explain the slight shock it gave him to see those two women in a measure confronting each other; the one a mere picture, the other in her vibrant flesh and blood,

but the features of both marked by that strange something which lifted them so immeasurably above the great level of their sex. It was odd that he had never before detected that curious common meeting ground of the two—the dancer, who was great by sheer grace, the social worker, whose grace stood out beyond her greatness, and, as he saw in that instant, a common shadow of that tragedy which so often strangely dogs grace and greatness in a woman.

Vera's question still hung between them unanswered, and he was aware that his pause had already been overlong.

"Yes. I got her out of Udine the night after the Austrians crossed the Tagliamento. Then I saw her again in Florence where she was dancing for the North Italian Relief. A wonderful woman!"

"Yes, indeed," Vera returned. "A beautiful—creature! Surely the car should be here."

Laying the photograph back as if she had almost forgotten its existence, she hurried to the window. Pulling aside the curtains, she gazed down into the street.

"They're here now," she said. "The limousine just stopped outside."

Weldon heard some one tripping hurriedly up the stairs. There was a cautious rap at the door. He opened it, standing surprisedly as he was confronted by Elsie Haight.

"Thank Heaven I'm in time!" she exclaimed, sparkling with excitement. "Miss Lawrence, our call was listened in on. I heard them talk. I tried to call you and couldn't. Quick, the car is outside."

At that moment there was a whirl of another motor in the street. Weldon rushed to the window and looked out. A squat black touring car was pulling up behind the limousine.

All three looked at each other. It

seemed that each could see the screaming headlines of the morning's papers proclaiming to the world the indiscretion of the modern Joan of Arc, discovered at midnight in a bachelor's quarters.

"The back stairs!" whispered Weldon. And as he hustled Vera along the deep hall to the rear of the house he saw Elsie Haight, with that unfathomable naïveté of expression and demeanor which had always so baffled him, descend toward the front door, through which in a moment the police would come.

As they felt their way down the narrow, dark stairway which had once served the servants of the house, they heard heavy footsteps entering the lower hall.

"Stop there!" came a man's voice. "What are you doing here?"

Vera's hand clutched Weldon's arm. It wasn't reasonable that that man should know of their presence behind doorways and partitions.

Then Elsie's calm voice came to them in the same tone that had mocked Weldon at Vera's apartment.

"Taking a walk, sir, and you?"

Another voice broke in.

"That ain't the one we want. Get a move on."

Out the back door into the still rear yard the fugitives hurried. They darted across the space that intervened between the house and the broad brick wall.

"I'll have to boost you," whispered Weldon. "Pull yourself up."

He took her dainty foot in his hands and lifted her. She grasped the parapet and scrambled to the top. In a moment Weldon had pulled himself up alongside. They could see the street through the little driveway that served the house beyond the wall.

"Let me help you down," said Weldon.

As he lowered her to the yard another figure vaulted to the coping. Weldon released Vera's hands just in

time to confront a burly fellow in plain clothes. Without hesitation he struck out with all the strength in his athletic body, catching the man squarely on the jaw. The enemy spun around and fell heavily to the ground.

Weldon sprang down and hastened after Vera. It seemed providential that the man had raised no cry. It might be minutes before the fellow would come to, and unless some one else had seen them they would have plenty of time to make good their escape. Around one corner after another they dashed, looking back now and then to see if they were being pursued. But no one came. At last, feeling that they had left the house safely behind, they paused.

"Twice in one night you've helped me, Bobby," said Vera. "I thank you for the cause."

"Don't thank me for the cause," he answered. "I didn't do it for the cause. I did it for you. And, Vera, after all," he laughed, "what could you women do without us men?"

"If there were no men we wouldn't have to do anything," she replied. "It is you who are making the trouble."

A taxicab returning from uptown, rolled into view. Weldon hailed it.

"Where now?" he asked Vera.

"The most public place is the safest," she answered. "Tell him to take us to the office of the *Morning Press*. They will listen to my story and see to it that I leave New York in safety."

CHAPTER III.

The week that followed Vera's escape was one of increasing interest as change succeeded change. The women's movement was like the dominant motive of a turbulent opera, beginning as a faint whisper almost drowned out by the tones of discord in the threats of general strike and class war, but swelling gradually, imperceptibly, till it

stood out clear and bold with the rest of the piece a mere accompaniment to it. On the part of the men, contempt had given way to wonder as this strange force, sensed at first rather than seen, had developed to a potency that appalled even those who had been most scornful of it.

Not since he had parted from her at the offices of the *Press* had Weldon seen or heard from Vera. With the impulse of the startling headlines of the story she had given to those columns, together with accounts of her fiery speech at the Opera House, her name was on all lips as the head and front of this extraordinary movement, but direct communication from her there had been none.

Since his return to New York Weldon had been concerned only with winding up his affairs there and taking Vera back with him to California. Her disappearance was a stunning blow. He was left in the city unable to arrange anything further because he could not know when or where he might see her again.

Ever since they had said good-by, to the accompanying crash of the great presses preparing her story for the public, and she had vanished inexorably into the leaden dawn, he had waited, hoping hopelessly to hear from her, striving vainly to reach her.

Time and again, during that week, he had called her apartments on the telephone only to receive the same baffling information: "They do not answer." Then, one day when he had again tried mechanically, hopelessly, Elsie Haight's voice came to him over the wire.

"Hello," he called, his despair giving place to a glad excitement. "May I speak with Miss Lawrence?"

"Miss Lawrence is not here," Elsie replied.

"This is Mr. Weldon," he said. "Can you tell me where I can find her?"

"Really, Mr. Weldon, I cannot. But if you will call later I'll try to have some information for you. At present I am under orders to tell nothing."

"At least, tell me this," he urged. "Is she safe and well?"

"I guess I couldn't be condemned for telling you that much," answered the secretary. "She is safe and well and as happy as—as yourself."

"Poor girl!" he muttered. "When can I hear more?"

"The Sphinx does not tell when she will speak," taunted the laughing voice of Miss Haight. "Patience is a divine quality, Mr. Weldon. Try to cultivate it. Good-by."

Her musical laugh was cut off by the click of the receiver.

It was a note of appointment from Haldane Harper that took him to the club that afternoon. As he swung down the street, wondering what Harper might have to say to him, he fell to counting the women he passed, wondering if Vera's movement had really gained any headway. There were still many, but somehow it seemed that the preponderance of men was greater than it should have been. And, in particular, the well-dressed women of society were missing. All the way to the club he walked without spying a single landaulet with its burden of *distraites*, too perfectly attired, shoppers such as in normal times one finds without number on Fifth Avenue.

On entering the club, he found an undercurrent of nervous excitement among its members. Little groups of prominent business men stood in agitated discussion, those on the outside of each group continually wandering to the next, standing there a moment and wandering on. Only Ashfield, the determinedly cynical man about town, seated apart in one of the deep leather chairs, a soda siphon at his elbow, seemed to be without disquietude. As Weldon gazed about him, seeking for

Harper, Ashfield turned on him the glassy beam of his monocle.

"Beware!" he declaimed, as Weldon approached. "It's contagious."

"What's contagious?" asked the mystified Weldon.

"The 'Good Gods,'" answered Ashfield. "They've all got 'em. You're fresh from the West and you don't understand. You see, you came back to a city already in the throes of an *opéra bouffe* revolution of sex. Xanthippe poises her bowl once more, and like Socrates we can but wipe our beards and say: 'Bring on the hemlock!'"

"What do you mean?" Weldon drew up a chair and sat down. Ashfield could be diverting at times.

"New York," said Ashfield, waving his hand in the general direction of everywhere, "the Middle West's fabulous land of wine, women, and song, our glorious country's only primrose path! First, they pluck the vine leaves from our hair by act of congress; now the women pluck themselves from us by act of—God, let us hope. As for song, listen to the 'De Profundis' of that crowd over there. Walwood is minus a couple of private secretaries. Stevens is short half a dozen efficient petticoats in his office, also—well, we'll stop there; and every one else seems to have lost a stenographer or a wife or Heaven knows what."

The monocle turned like a searchlight on Weldon's countenance.

"You don't appear exactly brimming with the joy of life yourself," the philosopher went keenly on. "Pardon me if I am indiscreet, but as far as I remember, you have no official right to mourn."

"All the same I think I'll sing tenor in the dirge," Weldon laughed.

"By the way, I think there's some mail at the desk for you," Ashfield called, as the other turned to join the nearest group.

"Mail!" The word made Weldon's heart jump. Since Vera's disappearance he had scanned anxiously every letter that had come to his apartments. Perhaps she had written to the club. It had once been his only address and in her excitement she might mechanically have used it. He knew better, and yet he hoped.

Eagerly he made his way to the desk. The attendant handed him a letter, a foreign letter dashing inscribed on an envelope of luxurious creaminess. He turned it wonderingly in his hands, noting the stamp and the postmark of Monaco, marveling from whom it could possibly be. Then a faint scent, hardly perceptible but of a subtle pervasiveness, stole upon his nostrils, and in a flash came the answer—Tamar Tsarskaya. In disappointment that it was not from Vera, he thrust it into his pocket, all the more hurriedly as a young man lounged up to him.

It was Billy Lamont, huge-shouldered, florid, healthily obtuse, beaming with the fatuousness of a young husband scarcely off his honeymoon.

"Here's a pickle," he chuckled. "I'm the only happy man in the club. I tell you it's great to be married to a regular girl! Look at those fellows over there. Sick-looking lot, aren't they?"

Why did this bore have to stand there rubbing it in? Billy was a nice fellow. In fact, he had been one of Weldon's most cherished friends. But in that instant, as the other stood there innocently chortling over his domestic bliss, the only alternatives seemed homicide or silence.

"If you are so happy with your wife, young man, I'd advise you to go home to her," grunted a voice, and turning, Weldon saw the long, lank form of John Pennymaker. "Whether brides have caught the affection yet I cannot say," he went on grimly. "It's forty years since I had one. But yesterday it was my secretaries who disappeared;

this morning my women buyers; and I am informed that to-morrow the sales force will go. Nothing seems to hold them."

Just then Haldane Harper entered the room, pausing with that unobtrusive manner that so marked the man, to scan the crowd. Weldon hastened to join him.

"Oh, there you are," said Harper in greeting. "Thank you for being so prompt. Since the feminine distractions of the street seem to have departed we shall be least disturbed by the window here. You say you are the fiancee of Miss Vera Lawrence?"

"Yes," answered Weldon.

"In that case," he smiled, "you should have considerable influence with her."

"I thought so once," Weldon told him, "but——"

"I know, I know. No man seems to have any influence over women these days. Miss Lawrence seems to have all of that. Our one hope is to influence Miss Lawrence."

Weldon's thoughts ran back to that last evening when he had tried in every way possible to dissuade Vera from taking the step that had changed civilization to chaos. He looked hopelessly at Harper and shook his head.

"You know where she is?" inquired Harper.

"I haven't heard a thing from her," replied Weldon, "since the night I saw you at the Opera House."

"There are a dozen or so places she might be," Harper told him. "Poughkeepsie, Tarrytown, New Rochelle, Ridgefield, Redding. But no man can get into any of those women's camps, and even our women agents report that they can find no trace of Miss Lawrence. You have no idea of her whereabouts?"

"Before I answered that," Weldon smiled, "I should have to know exactly for what purpose you are asking."

"Did I show myself inimical to Miss Lawrence on the night of her speech?" Harper quickly returned. "Had it been my desire, she would not have left the Opera House except under arrest. But as it was——"

He broke off with a smile of meaning, and in his glance and manner there was that which inspired Weldon to entire confidence.

"What is the government's attitude?" asked Weldon.

"The desire of the government is always to preserve the status quo," Harper replied. "Since it is Miss Lawrence who is at least most picturesquely prominent in disturbing that, it is with Miss Lawrence that we most earnestly desire to confer. The lady seems to have vanished off the face of the earth. But it is notorious that where the law fails love can find a way."

Weldon sat in silent confusion at this intrusion of national affairs into what had hitherto been an idyl known to Vera and himself alone. With a certain bitterness of amusement he reflected that he was being chosen to succeed where the might of Washington had failed; the acid of his own failure tinged his voice as he replied:

"In other words, the government is seeking to bend our most intimate affairs to its own ends."

"Governments use any means they can," answered Harper. "And in the present case the less obvious the better."

"What do you want me to do?"

"If you could get speech with Miss Lawrence," said Harper, with a wry smile, "surely that should not be too much against your own wishes."

"Even if I could find out where she is," Weldon asked, determined not to betray his suspicion of her whereabouts, received from her words on the night of her escape, "how could a man gain entrance to their camps?"

"We would put a plane at your dis-

posal and you might—ah—just drop in."

"Mr. Harper"—it was Pennymaker who gloomed saturninely up to them, behind him Walwood, seeming to trail the whole weight of his nation-wide chain of stores—"you are in the government service, are you not? I mean you have something to do with the government investigation of—er—this—ah—this damned walkout of the women?"

"I am here in an entirely private capacity," Harper smiled, "but if I had?"

"Why doesn't the government put a stop to it?"

"How, pray? They are breaking no law," was Harper's calm response.

"Red tape! Red tape!" Walwood exploded, but Harper went quietly on.

"What would you have the government do, shoot the ladies? They're out to prevent this strike and the turmoil that would follow, civil war perhaps. And from the way both sides are holding off it looks as if they might do it."

"But why," persisted Walwood, "do they drag our women off? Let the strikers' families go, we don't care about that."

Harper looked at him amusedly.

"Perhaps that is exactly what the strikers are saying in their turn."

His words were cut short by a frantic cry from the direction of the desk.

"My wife! My wife! She's gone, she's gone!" And Billy Lamont, the fatuous placidity of his face broken like the reflections on some pool into which a stone has been cast, hurtled through the door. A moment later they saw him charging down the street, hatless, already disheveled as if his emotions were taking force in his very attire.

With a shrug Harper rose.

"Another of the tragi-comedies of these New York Arabian Nights," he said. "If you'll come with me, Weldon, we'll make arrangements for you to leave Mineola in the morning."

CHAPTER IV.

Soon after dawn the next morning Weldon and Harper were at the Mineola flying field. When the aviator had substituted flying togs for his civilian clothes in the quarters of a comrade of the Asiago days, they strode out in the dewy freshness of early morning to the field office. To Weldon the sight of long lines of planes warming up, driving back great swirls of dust with the propeller race, the sputter and din of the engines, acted like the smell of sawdust in the nostrils of an old circus performer.

Lieutenants, their leather coats tightly buttoned, their helmets slung over one arm, brisked into the field office, then down the line of hangars to inspect their ships. And in a few moments one machine after another crawled like a huge beetle from the line, and when the dead line was crossed, suddenly darted forward and hurtled into the air.

Harper presented a sealed envelope to the flying officer of the day. The lieutenant opened it and read. Then he turned to Weldon.

"Any particular ship, sir?" he asked.

"No," answered the eager Weldon, "anything from a Caproni to an S. E. S. Better give me a J. N. 4, I guess. Heaven knows where I'll have to land!"

The officer consulted his files.

"Three two eight four one, Hangar five," he said. "I'll have it on the line for you at once. There'll be a side car here in a moment."

As Weldon waited outside the field office for one of those quick-moving little side cars which whisk the more fortunate aviators back and forth on the flying field, he turned questioningly to Harper. So far the man had maintained a complete silence as to what action should be taken upon arrival at Redding.

"Just what do you wish me to do if I get to see Miss Lawrence?" he asked.

"You've given me credentials, but no instructions."

"Use your own judgment," answered the official. "Find out just what the women want. If you can get Miss Lawrence to come to New York for a conference, so much the better."

"Do I go as an emissary of the government?"

Harper smiled and turned to regard the side car which darted up, wheeled within its own radius, and came to a standstill before them.

"I see you don't understand governments, Weldon," he said. "If you can get Miss Lawrence to come here, do so. Otherwise do the best you can. Good-by and good luck!"

The side car hurried Weldon away to hangar five where the mechanics were just putting 32841 on the line. As soon as he had alighted he went about the inspection of the plane, pounding the struts, tapping the wires, examining the control cables. He lifted the ship by the horizontal stabilizer, jerked at the vertical fin, and examined devices and connections. Then he climbed into the cockpit, adjusted his maps in the map holder, and buckled the safety belt around him.

A mechanic, his hands on the propeller, smiled at him, at the same time shouting:

"Off!"

"Off!" repeated Weldon, looking at the switch and holding out the choke ring.

After the mechanic had turned the engine over a few times, he called:

"Contact!"

Weldon let go the choke and threw on the switch.

"Contact," he answered.

A quick turn of the propeller and the motor purred gently. Impatient though he was to be off, Weldon let it warm up through the seemingly interminable period of slow turning over and the shorter moment of racing when the plane strained against the blocks and he

had to keep the stick well back to hold the tail down. Then at last, at a signal from the mechanic, he shut the engine off and, crawling under the drag wires, the man removed the blocks from in front of the wheels. When this was done Weldon taxied over the dead line, obliqued, and took off into the faint breeze that came across the field. The J. N. 4 bumped along a few hundred feet, then took the air. Weldon leveled off for a moment, then pulled the plane's nose gently up for a climb out of the field.

The checkered green of Long Island, streaked with roads, dotted with infinitesimal houses; the blue gray of the Sound untouched as yet by the rays of the sun; the plaquelike ruggedness of the mainland, slid beneath him. At Norwalk he turned inland, following roughly the crooked little branch line that runs up into the Connecticut hills. Now, with New York and its problems left definitely behind, with the green of the wooded slopes showing beneath him, with the sun climbing up over the eastern horizon, Weldon's spirit took on a mad eagerness. The very drone of the motor seemed an ever-recurring song: "You're going to Vera; you're going to Vera."

Georgetown at last, a little cluster of roofs in a depression in the hills, and then toward the edge of the relief beneath appeared the Redding camp. About a fine old mansion, crowning one of the hills, neat rows of wooden buildings were arranged. Below these a pool of crystal water flowed off into a stream that silvered through a quiet glen; around it all a high fence.

Picking a small meadow within the enclosure as a possible landing place Weldon glided down and flew a cross course over it, only a few feet from the ground. Satisfied with this inspection he went down the wind a few hundred feet, turned, and shut off the motor, landing on three points just in-

side the stone fence that enclosed the meadow.

It was not till the ship had rolled along this strange field to a complete stop that Weldon had time to take notice of what was going on in the camp about him. Now he saw women approaching from every direction. Women! It seemed to him he had never known there were so many in the world before. And yet this was only one of a score of such feminine retreats. Women, every shape, size, and complexion, accompanied by droves of children as by clouds of witnesses. In those stunning numbers all sense of personality was lost, merged into the mass, even as in the ranks of an army individual manhood sinks to mere units of dehumanized powers.

As he watched several in army uniforms pushed to the front, scaled the low wall, and came over to the machine. One of these, a clean-cut, athletic-looking creature, whose air of competent authority proclaimed her as having seen actual service in one of the women's departments of the war, advanced to where he stood beside the fusilage.

"I'm sorry, sir," she said, "but I'll have to place you under arrest."

Weldon loosened his leather coat.

"I have credentials here," he told her, "from the United States government."

"I'll have to take you to the guardhouse just the same," she answered. "You can present your credentials to the officer of the guard. I have strict orders to arrest any man found on the post."

It was with difficulty that the guards cleared a way for him through the throng that pressed about him in an enormous curiosity, as about a creature from some other world from which they had shut themselves off by their own determination. Down the broad street, between the rows of barracks the guards led Weldon, the curious crowd steadily increasing as they walked

along. Finally, they entered a low, square building which stood at a little distance from the other structures.

An intelligent-looking, middle-aged woman in a lieutenant's uniform rose from before a desk and approached. The corporal saluted.

"A prisoner," she said. "He claims to have credentials from the government of the United States."

Then she turned to Weldon.

"Your credentials, please."

Weldon produced them. The officer looked carefully through them.

"And what is your mission?" she asked, without looking up from the papers.

"I can only tell that to Miss Vera Lawrence," replied Weldon.

"Miss Lawrence, unfortunately, is not on this post," answered the officer.

"Then where can I reach her?" asked Weldon.

"As soon as we can tune up the wire-less telephone we will get in touch with her present headquarters. In the meantime, I regret to say, I shall be compelled to put you in solitary confinement."

"You might tell Miss Lawrence my name when you call her," suggested Weldon when the corporal had finished taking down the data concerning his arrest.

Weldon was detained for a few moments in the guardhouse, then led out along the lane, between the low wooden buildings, to the mansion of the great humorist. Here he was ushered to a pleasant suite overlooking the little valley. The guards withdrew, locking the door, but a slow, steady step in the hall told of a sentry keeping watch over him.

The degree of organization which these women had attained amazed him. In his handling there had been no hitch; all had been dispatched with quiet competence. This, he could see, was no sporadic outbreak, but a carefully-

planned, well-developed movement, the efficiency of which made it alike a promise and a threat. The location of the camp, calculated to hold its inmates satisfied through the sheer beauty of its surroundings; the wideness of the preparation, complete in every detail even to the little fire-houses along the streets; the marvelous leverage, psychologically perfect, which had without physical compulsion impelled women from every walk of life to that voluntary exile. brought to him a sense of the potency of the forces behind. Where the war department had been compelled to rely on the draft to fill its ranks, even in the face of foreign war, these forces had applied moral suasion with even more complete success.

He could sense behind all this the creative genius that had carpeted the earth with Charles Gard's rubber tires and had put within the reach of the masses the greatest utility of modern times. In the lavishness of expenditure, comparable only to that of the war department itself, an entire system of society disclosed itself, fighting for its defense. There was no doubt of the intense masculinity of the backing of this affair, while the handling of it, with its adroit combination of outing, adventure, and crusade showed an understanding of feminine nature such as only the feminine could bring.

"All the same," he muttered to himself, "they can't hold them for long. Whatever they do must be done quickly."

And with that there came to him an understanding of Harper's apparently unconcerned sitting back. Only so far could this movement go; then it would fall of its own weight. And Vera? Would she go down under it, overwhelmed by the collapse of her mad scheme? She would find him ready to come at her call. And yet—he shuddered. The magnitude of it appalled him. His Vera was like a lion tamer

2—Ains.

surrounded by throngs of half-starved beasts.

The door opened and the corporal of the guard entered with his lunch.

"Miss Lawrence will see you in the morning," she told him, as she placed the tray upon the table and took her departure.

An intolerably long afternoon of reverie, of pacing idly back and forth, of gazing out of the window over the soft green hills; an evening of impatient brooding, then sleep unbroken till the rousing notes of "first call" sounded over the clear morning air. And after he had bathed and shaved and eaten his breakfast, the officer of the day entered and conducted him down to what had been the study of the great writer and—Vera.

It was like a sudden projection into a new world, old in his memory. Before him sat Vera, the fairy princess to reach whom, like the knight of old, he had crossed all barriers and overcome all opposition. All in white, without a trace of the military about her, she seemed waiting not for the message of the government, but for him alone. The room was redolent with the perfume of lilacs, and a great cluster of their blooms shone purple and white upon the desk before her.

As the door closed behind Weldon, she faced him with a demure amusement peeping from her official manner. The amusement deepened as he advanced toward her with outstretched hands.

"Vera!"

"First, to whom am I speaking, please?" she checked him. "To an agent of the government of the United States or to—"

"To so mighty a plenipotentiary that he has the right to do this," laughed Weldon, as he folded her in his arms, surprising a return from the lips he pressed with his own. "How dare you

treat such a puissant personage with arrest?"

"The penalty of prominence is that it must be guarded," she twinkled. "The only man——"

"I was really grateful. So much pent-up femininity is rather appalling," he answered. Then his tone grew graver. "When it starts to break loose it will be a debacle."

"To break loose?" she questioned.

His glance swept keenly about the place.

"Last night—it was rather horrible in a way," he admitted. "It gave me a feeling of being an island in a sea, quiet now, but with potencies." His tone grew earnest, his hand sought hers in protective warning. "For Heaven's sake take care, Vera; you don't know what you're playing with. You can't keep such force held back for long and, frankly, it frightens me. Frightens me for you!"

"You say that!" she mocked. "You who have seen a million men moving as one at one man's word."

"Women are not men. And when did women ever obey a woman's word?"

"They are coming at mine!" she exclaimed in triumph. "By the hundred thousand every day. The city that was your pride is closed and crippled by their mere absence."

"You can sweep them out on the wave of their emotions," Weldon began, "but when that wave turns backward——"

"Emotions!" she interjected. "You think us capable of nothing else?"

She drew away from him, quivering with a touch of that same white fire she had displayed at the Opera House; an exaltation almost superhuman, which struck Weldon with fear, a fear for her. With his penetration sharpened by devotion, he saw it was useless to plead.

"Was it emotion that planned this?" she continued. "Is it emotion that car-

ried out without hitch the uprooting and transporting of more than half a million women and children? A wave of emotion, you say. Then let it be so! I tell you I see that wave sweeping invisibly around the globe till it shall lift this very mockery of civilization itself, and lift it to the heights that we alone can see. And if I can help, ever so little, there is no warning, no consideration that can stop me; no sacrifice too great!"

"Have you ever seen a wave shattered unavailingly against a cliff?" Weldon asked.

"And what is your cliff?" she demanded fearlessly.

"I was thinking of nature," he somberly replied.

"Nature? We *are* nature," she declared. "Can't you see that it is for you that we are doing this, and for the future of the race, the burden of bearing whom is laid upon *us*? But I forget," she said, forcing herself to a quieter tone. "You came here with a message."

"They want you to come to New York for a conference."

"And once I am in New York," she laughed cuttingly, "in the hands of the men who would willingly have blasted my reputation to gain their ends—what then?"

"The man who sent me is the man whose warning saved you that night—Haldane Harper."

"What we want is known as clearly to them as it is to us. Their proposition must be one of action, not of words. It is not as if we were asking sacrifices; it is we who are *making* them. We are making them gladly and we can afford to wait."

"Is that your last word?" asked Weldon.

"My very last."

"And have you none for me?"

She considered him an instant as he stood there drawing about her an invisible mantle of exaltation, almost ves-

tal, as of a young priestess at an altar upon whose fires she was laying her most golden treasure.

"You can tell Haldane Harper this: That I salute his subtlety in sending you here all unwittingly to turn me traitor by your love. And to you I will admit—the test was hard."

And at that, before Weldon could prevent her, she was gone.

CHAPTER V.

The change in New York during Weldon's short absence had been amazing. The city was like a stupefied monster through whose hardened arteries of streets trickled a sluggish stream of sheer masculinity, the darker corpuscles of its life blood from which the vivifying color had been strangely drained away. Almost a city in siege it seemed, bringing back to Weldon odd recollections of those torn towns of the war front wherein the greatest wonder was a woman.

Over all the bridges out of Manhattan, on all the trains, and on each steamer that left the wharves went forth the van of a new army. New York had become intolerable, and as many men as could were leaving. And with its increasing emptiness a great wave of crime had broken out.

Upon his arrival in the city Weldon hastened to get in touch with Harper. The deadness of the telephone as he put the receiver to his ear, like an echo of the general deadness, reminded him that all the operators had by now deserted their posts and gone to join the exodus of determined femininity.

He hastened to the Plaza, hoping to find Harper there, but was informed at the desk that the man he sought had gone out earlier in the day. Leaving a note to let Harper know that he had returned and would be at home that evening, he went on to the club, feeling that by chance he might find him there.

It was at the club that he found the most striking evidence of the effect of Vera's movement.

Here, in the habitat of faultlessly-dressed, strictly-groomed aristocracy, was scarcely a face that did not show stubble; scarcely a tie was not askew with that infinitesimal variation that cries out loudly in such society. Only Ashfield, sitting by his soda siphon as though he had hardly stirred, seemed like a rock of sameness.

Weldon, freshly shaven, felt that his smoothness of face rendered him unduly conspicuous, and he gravitated to Ashfield as like to like.

"Well, Ashfield," he laughed, "you at least seem quite your old self."

"I have to preserve my reputation for wickedness," the other returned. "It's easier than it used to be. In these days a clean collar is almost a conviction of a secret harem. At any rate, it caused a disheveled steel king to weep tears of envy on my bosom this morning. His wife, his secretary, and his three favorite soubrettes had all dropped out of sight, leaving him to the desolation of his own society. Have you seen Broadway?"

"No," answered Weldon, "I've been out of town for the last two days."

"And you came back?" drawled Ashfield with a languid flick of his cigarette. "You extraordinary man! The Rialto is really funny. Not its ducats, but its daughters are fled, and the parading *Shylocks* mourn in droves. I doubt if there's a woman left from the Battery to the Bronx. Lucian Eldridge, our most manly female impersonator, the one who 'treats 'em rough' and the only perfect lady left to us, bravely did his best to cheer the boys up, but was saved only by the fire curtain. Theaters are closed, restaurants minus waitresses. Oh, man, this is a real experience!"

"Theaters closed!" echoed Weldon.

"Oh, except for the movies," Ashfield answered with a grimace of dis-

gust. "This has at least relieved us of the attitudinizing male of the screen, with his toothful superathletics or his two-gunned superhuman chivalry. It is the ladies—shall I interject 'God bless 'em?—who rule our flickering realms of romance. The purple-haired vamp or the simple little divorcee with her innocent curls draws crowds that have to be held off with shotguns."

"Exactly," said Weldon with the vague smile of a man whose mind is on other things. "By the way, I'm hunting Harper."

"Harper?" Ashfield's glance took on a sudden shrewdness. "What do you in that galley? Ah, *j'me resouvien!* Of course, you are the affianced, are you not, of our modern feminine Coeur de Lion?"

"All of which means——" asked Weldon.

"Nothing at all, my dear boy, nothing at all," drawled Ashfield. "One of my chief charms is that I never mean anything. It is simply that I was wondering for what especial part they were casting you on the stage of our national comedy, of which Harper promises to be the professionally inscrutable Belasco. Are you to be the hero of the fair-haired friend who dies in the third act?"

"I haven't the faintest notion of what you are talking about," said Weldon, moving away. And Ashfield's voice pursued him down the room in the tone of the inveterate seeker after the last word.

"No more have I, my dear boy, no more have I."

Weldon walked briskly uptown, noting on every hand evidences of those conditions the seriousness of which Ashfield had covered with his veil of cynicism. He had thought of stopping at a restaurant, but found everyone which he passed jammed, with a waiting line to the street. It was no time for one who had the resourcefulness of a

campaigner to add to the general burden, so he decided to prepare something at his apartment.

Fifty-ninth Street, except for its unswept steps, a certain unkemptness that was beginning to creep over its houses, showed less of the change that had spread over the city. With a shock of surprise, Weldon wondered if his own landlady had joined the exodus. So far Vera's absence had swallowed up all other personal aspects of the affair, but the prospect of dusty halls and unchanged linen brought home to him the general predicament. As he was fitting his key into the latch, a shrill whistle from the sidewalk attracted him, and a boyish pipe:

"Hey, mister, do y' want a valet?"

Weldon turned in some amusement. A weedy urchin of indeterminate age, overtall for his years, like a plant grown in too much darkness, stood before him. From the nondescript raggedness of his attire and his blond and tangled patch of hair, he was perhaps thirteen, but his face, peering from beneath the visor of the downpulled cap, held the oversophistication of a purely city product, heightened by a distressed cigarette drooping from a corner of his impudent mouth.

"You have references from the Vanderbilts?" asked Weldon blandly.

"Aw, cheese it. I'm on de level," the boy retorted.

"What's this, a new profession?" Weldon smiled.

"I gotta do somethin'," the kid answered. "Me mother's gone, an' there ain't nothin' in shoeshinin' no more, now that the dames is all went. Say, mister"—the boy's voice took a pleading tone—"I can dust up an' wash the dishes an' I can cook, too. I done it for me mother," he interjected. "The poor old girl's a cripple, least she was 'fore they took her away. An' honest, I ain't made a cent for two days."

There was a curious appealingness

about the boy, for which Weldon found it hard to account, unless it were that the little fellow in some way reminded him of those children of the Brenta, veiling their tragedy under a Latin jauntiness. The boy caught his wavering and adroitly pushed his momentary advantage.

"Say, mister, maybe you t'ink I'm one of dese guys that's been goin' around crackin' cribs, but you c'n just lay yer bets dat if a guy treats me white I won't do him no dirt. As long as I'm wit' you they ain't nobody goin' to jimmy none of your windows. An' I don't want no pay neither; all I want's somethin' to eat."

In spite of the pathos of his attack, deliberately heightened in the dramatic wisdom of the streets, there was a twinkling impishness about the lad which attracted Weldon's attention, deterring the word of dismissal, accompanied by a quarter, which he would otherwise have given.

"How was it you didn't go with your mother to the camp?" he asked.

"Me mother wanted to take me, but Miss Lawrence she said I was too old to be up there among all them skoits," was the impudent reply.

"Miss Lawrence!" Weldon ejaculated with a glance of suspicion. But the smudged face turned toward him without guile. "Do you know Miss Lawrence?"

"Sure I do. I don't know how me mother would have lived wit' out her. Say, ain't she the swell dame? Oh, gee!" The boy clapped his hand over his mouth. "I hadn't ought to speak of her like that around this burg. A guy hit me a wallop yesterday for sayin' that."

So that was how Vera was regarded in New York. Back of the lad's words Weldon caught a flash of how she had brought down upon herself the enmity of an entire city. It almost seemed that in all Manhattan there were

only himself and this lad to speak a word of admiration for her. With an impulse he threw open the door.

"Get in," he said. "I'll give you something to eat anyhow. Then we'll see."

The apartment had evidently not been touched since he had left it. Viewing that litter of a too-hasty masculine departure, the lad snatched the cap from his tangled mop of hair and turned back the sleeves of the coat several sizes too large for him.

"All right, mister, here's where I show you how me mother trained me."

Weldon almost thought he had found a treasure. With a swift sort of magic the disorder disappeared, while from the kitchenette came appetizing odors of coffee.

In one of his forays around the room the boy came upon Vera's photograph.

"That's her!" he exclaimed. Then, almost accusingly to Weldon, "Say, do you know her?" As Weldon nodded, he went on. "So that's why you let me come up, is it? She's sure some class, but—all the same—"

"Well?" asked Weldon sharply, as the lad paused.

"Well, it don't look right to me somehow, all these here dames walkin' out. You can't tell me nothin' about strikes. I live down where they make 'em. Our street's all button makers, an' one winter they struck an' struck an' struck, an' when they wanted their jobs back they found that somebody else had got 'em."

"Well?" asked Weldon again, struck by the preternatural acuteness of the boy's manner.

It deepened to impishness. The lad reached over, helped himself to one of Weldon's cigarettes, and stuck it in the corner of his mouth.

"That's all," he answered. And across a puff of smoke came a glance such as a born denizen of lower Broadway might give to one admittedly of Brooklyn.

"You're an impudent young hound," said Weldon. "By the way, what's your name?"

"Me name?" repeated the youngster with a shade of truculence. "Me name's Love, but they don't call me by it, see. They mostly calls me 'you.'"

He might have said more but his glance had fallen on the photograph of Tamar Tsarskaya. Perhaps no greater tribute could have been paid to the charm of that distant woman than the effect of her printed reflection upon this hardened product of the sidewalks. The sharp intensity of his expression, the clutch he made for the photograph, were something which puzzled Weldon. Then came a shrill whistle of sheer boyishness.

"For the love o' Mike, say, mister, who is she?"

"No one you know," Weldon answered. "A Russian lady. A great dancer."

"Huh, I know them," said the boy. "I saw their pictures outside the opra—oh, gee!"

It was a sharp ring of the bell which had surprised that ejaculation from the boy's lips. He retreated toward the kitchen in some confusion.

"Say, mister, who's that? You don't want me to answer the door, do you?"

"What are you afraid of?" demanded Weldon. "The police?"

"No, no, I ain't done nothin'. Honest, I ain't," the boy protested, blushing. "But you don't know who it might be 'n me in these—these clothes."

"Stay where you are," Weldon ordered, as he went to the door. "I'll not have you hiding."

"I got to go," the boy muttered, clutching for his cap, his eyes on the door which Weldon was opening.

It was Harper who entered, cool, unhurried, with that atmosphere of authority which always accompanied him.

"Ah, Weldon, so you got back—" Harper stopped suddenly as his glance

caught the incongruous figure of the urchin who stood there, cap already on his head, imperceptibly edging his way toward the door, in one hand the photograph he had evidently forgotten.

"A little protégé of Miss Lawrence," Weldon explained, "and, if my nose does not deceive me, quite an excellent cook."

There was a moment of silence as Harper and the boy regarded each other, the one with a slight perplexity which grew into almost amusement, the other in an unwillingness that flushed to impudence. Weldon could not comprehend it, but he had the impression of a silent understanding between the two, as Harper turned to him blandly.

"Quite a treasure, I should say." Then to the boy: "Do you usually put on your cap before you leave a room, my lad?"

"Oh, I got to go," muttered the lad, making a dash for the door, but Weldon's hand intercepted him.

"Come back again in an hour for your pay and your meal, but leave that photograph here."

"Photograph?" The boy looked down at it in surprise, then up at the two men with recovered impudence. "Gee, I didn't know—here y' are, mister."

His hand on the doorknob, he paused in the open doorway for a parting shot.

"Say, if I was one of these here Janes what's left their homes I'd be kind of glad to know *that* dame wasn't in New York."

He went, at that, with a slam of the door, shuffling his way down the stairs, and Weldon turned in apology to Harper.

"I don't usually—but under the circumstances—with a recommendation from (Miss Lawrence—"

"I quite understand," said Harper with a shade of dryness. "A remarkable lad! So your mission failed?"

"You know that?" Weldon exclaimed.

"I knew it an hour before you arrived in New York. Just what did Miss Lawrence say?" Harper asked. Then, as Weldon hesitated, he smiled. "Hardly a fair question that. Just give me the gist of it."

"The gist of it was 'no to everything,'" said Weldon, "but she paid you a high compliment."

"I have a suspicion that Miss Lawrence and I understand each other. By the way, who did you say that lad was, just now?"

"A protégé of Miss Lawrence. He says his name is Love."

"I see," Harper nodded. "And the photograph he was carrying off?"

Weldon showed it, in some surprise that the great man could be dealing in trivialities in the face of his failure in his first move with Vera.

"Ah, Tamar Tsarskaya!" said Harper. Then, as his glance fell upon the cartouche in the corner of the photograph, he looked at the other with interest. "May I ask if you are acquainted with her?"

"I knew her quite well in Florence," Weldon began, then stopped, feeling in his pocket. "By George, I had entirely forgotten!"

Drawing out the letter which he had received at the club, he was about to lay it on the table, pending Harper's departure, but the other, with that directness which could characterize him when he chose, exclaimed bluntly:

"If that happens to be from her, please open it."

Slightly astonished, Weldon complied. Greatness seemed to be above the conventions, he thought, as Harper looked up from his study of the photograph with a sharp: "Well!"

"I hardly see——"

"It's not necessary for you to," Harper interjected authoritatively, "but it is necessary for me to have some idea of the lady."

"You mean this is official?" Weldon asked.

"Oh, call it Federal if you like," returned the other.

Weldon threw the letter on the table with a laugh of perplexity.

"I'll be glad if you can interpret for me," he said.

A sheet of rough-edged note paper, rather unduly luscious, across its surface three crushed violets, and the single signature: "Tamar."

As he looked again a flush of sudden memory rose on Weldon's cheeks and, noting it, Harper smiled dryly.

"I thought you could hardly have forgotten," he remarked.

The subtle perfume of the paper had indeed opened a flood of memory for Weldon. A spring dusk a year ago on a terrace at Fiesoli, a veritable fairyland to one on brief furlough from the pit of shrieking boredom beyond Venice, Florence, in her wartime darkness, looming mysteriously through the mists of the Arno, glimpsed like a *coup de théâtre* between the rose-filled vases of the balustrade. And Tamar—a strange woman, oddly disturbing, black clad, creamily pale under her masses of dark hair, hovering there in the warm dusk like some strange black-and-white flower from a garden of sheer fantasy. The touch of her hands as she pinned a bunch of violets across the silver wings on his breast, a promise lightly given in the haste of his departure for the Milan train—Harper's voice recalled him to the present.

"And the solution?"

"It was war time," Weldon answered. "I promised that if she should need me and I could come without neglecting duty——"

"That violets would be the sign, eh?" Harper murmured. Then, after a moment's pause: "Did you notice that boy's words as he went out of the door?"

"Why—no, not particularly," said Weldon, slightly bewildered at the sud-

den turn, "only that they were impudent."

Harper walked to the window, standing long in silence. When he spoke again it was as if he had completely lost the thread of their former discourse.

"The city's going to the devil," he mused. "Every violence and crime rearing their ugly heads. Commerce is half paralyzed. How should it be otherwise when women, the only really wanting creatures, are withdrawn? Strange that civilization should be such a feminine affair! And when the feminine withdraws—the question is, how much does she really withdraw? After all, a woman's physical presence is about the least of her. She has withdrawn that, to be sure, but those enormous invisibilities, I can feel them all about me, still peopling the city with their unseen presences."

He turned suddenly on Weldon.

"And meanwhile you are wondering why I stand here doing nothing."

"Really, sir——" Weldon protested, but Harper cut him short.

"My boy, I have learned that there are two ways of dealing with the women. The one is simply to sit tight, but in this case we can hardly afford the time. The other is—to call in the help of another woman."

"You mean to suggest——" Weldon began.

"Tsarskaya," Harper went on, regarding the photograph as if he had not heard. "A woman beautiful, internationally famous, even to notoriety, lifted by sheer grace to a place above the reach of usual feminine conventions."

Then he shot a sudden question.

"Where is she now?"

"Her letter was posted at Monaco."

"Monaco," Harper pondered.

"Strange that you, the affianced of Miss Lawrence, the very prop of this feminine insurgence, should be receiving the message of those violets from Tsarskaya, who might be described as the

head and front of feminine insurgence in an entirely different form."

He pondered again, and when he spoke his tone was briskly business-like.

"If the pick of government seaplanes were placed at your disposal, how long would it take you to get to Monaco and return?"

"Six days is the minimum, with the ships we have now."

"The twelve-hundred horsepower navy type Skipworth Bullet," Harper prompted.

Weldon's eyes glistened at the prospect of piloting one of these new strutless marvels whose very existence was a secret outside of service circles. "With one of *them*, five days certainly." Then he demurred in some dismay, "But what am I to do when I get there?"

"You will make Mademoiselle Tsarskaya an offer to return with you immediately for a single performance in which she will be the only woman in New York."

Suddenly Weldon's eagerness left him, as there came a suspicion of Harper's possible motive.

"As you yourself said, I am the fiancé of Miss Lawrence, and the course you suggest hardly seems loyal to her," he objected.

"The greatest service a man can do to a woman is to defeat her, at least in such a pass as this," said Harper earnestly. "Miss Lawrence does not realize the danger of her course, the danger to herself, I mean. And if I loved her I should not hesitate to use the most drastic means to save her from the position in which she has placed herself."

Exactly what sort of an offer do you wish me to make Mademoiselle Tsarskaya?" Weldon asked, as the other's tone brought reassurance.

"Offer her anything she asks," replied Harper vehemently. "Anything at all. But bring her!"

CHAPTER VI.

Sunrise found Weldon, with the two naval lieutenants who were to accompany him on his dash for the Riviera, making a final inspection of the giant plane that the mechanics had been grooming all night for the trip across the Atlantic. The ship was an aquatic big brother to the Christmas Bullet, the strutless midget that had startled the world only a short time before with its unprecedented speed of three miles a minute. But where the Christmas Bullet could carry only the pilot in its short fuselage, this great flying boat had room for six in the hull, with provision for two more in each of the macelles placed part way out on the wings.

The ship was a revelation to Weldon. Inspection had always entailed the testing of flying and landing wires and the batting of struts. But here were neither struts nor wires to test. Strength and rigidity were secured by the use of steel beams within the wing panels and in this way resistance had been cut down to a minimum.

As they prepared for the take-off, little Bell, the junior of the two naval officers, grinned at Weldon.

"I guess we should make the Azores by to-night with this baby," he said.

St. Johns, the regular first stop, had been cut from their schedule. And when they had risen, like a startled gull, from the water, they headed straight out to sea on a direct course for Porta Delgada. In a few minutes the brown shore had been completely eliminated from the panorama beneath them, only a blue circle, flecked here and there with white, remaining.

Flying at the comparatively low altitude which seaplanes keep, they swept now and then above some snailing steamer in the pool beneath them, catching sight of excited passengers waving from the decks. But for the most part

there was only the sea and the sky, joined by the perfect circle of the horizon, like twin halves of some vast blue crystal.

Hour after hour Weldon found himself turning over the events of the past week. Out here, suspended between these unchanging elements, the political kaleidoscope of New York seemed grotesque as a dream in which the only reality was that vibrant figure of Vera herself. The vague unease of a seeming treachery to her in this journey to Tsarskaya still fretted him at intervals and he turned for solace to the words which Harper had whispered to him at parting.

"Always remember the greatest service a man can do a woman is—to defeat her."

And after all, it was a tribute to Vera that, in order to defeat her daring crusade, he must travel nearly five thousand miles to seek such a figure as Tsarskaya. With a little glow of triumph for Vera's sake he reflected that even so widely acquainted a man as Haldane Harper himself could think of no other woman on the American continent who could cope with her. Dimly he saw this journey from woman to woman, each raised on a pedestal above the rest of her sex, each in her way a figure of dynamic potency, and himself hurtling through the air tracing his course like an invisible wire between the two. He wondered what would happen when those opposing currents met and clashed.

It was odd that he somehow could not seem more disturbed, but the swift surprises of the last few days had left him mentally numb. One thing he saw more and more clearly—the extraordinary unpermittableness of the situation of that city, the danger of the fires that Vera had kindled; verily, it was true that for her own safety she must be defeated. New York—it kept recurring to him, with its strange scenes

of gradual decadency. For the first time he thought again of that strange, impudently attractive lad of the day before, remembering him, too frail, too sophisticated, yet with a certain pathos of appeal. Weldon felt a pang of self-condemnation for having permitted him to disappear alone, without having made some provision for his safety in that chaos of a city.

The last rays of the sunset lighted like a beacon on the towering crest of Pico, as through the gathering dimness of the half tropic evening, they slid down to the water at Porta Delgada. Harper had evidently left nothing undone to smooth their path. The cables had been hot and their credentials were waved aside as the ship came to rest on the inclined runway of the pontoon. A glimpse of white walls against the darkening sky, a dinner in a courtyard where lanterns twinkled amidst purple creepers, then sleep claimed them for its own.

Next morning, like the reversal of a film, those pictures slid backward to the start and the sunrise on Pico lighted their way off on the sea lap to Gibraltar. The sunny coasts of Spain slid away beneath; islands like green jewels in the amethyst of the Mediterranean, grim Corsica looming sullenly on their beam. Like some wearied bird, the plane dipped down, a coast of purple dream jeweled with light rising above her as she taxied to her resting place. A chatter of gesticulating Latins; Bell's voice, masked by a huge yawn:

"Monaco! All out!"

As he haled his cramped limbs up the steps from the yacht harbor, Weldon pondered on his coming interview with Tamar Tsarskaya. The day before, each hour had borne in on him more strongly that he was leaving Vera, but each succeeding league of the second lap of the journey had brought more vividly the approaching presence of Tamar. Now the purple warmth and

scents of the Mediterranean night, the almost hectic atmosphere of luxury, ease, and excitement that hangs perpetually over that emotional hothouse, seemed a very emanation of the dancer herself. The electric diadems of the casino, glowing through the palms, the pale façades of the Condamine might have been designed as the *decor du ballet* for her exotic grace. It was with an excitement he could hardly explain that he called a *fiacre* for the drive to the villa which had been pointed out as hers.

A bandbox of a place, on the terraced heights above the castled rock of Monaco, a sort of Mauresque jewel casket in a velvet setting of green garden. That he was expected was evident even from the bearing of the liveried major-domo who admitted him; a murmur, a deferential waving aside of his inquiries, an immediate drawing of the heavy portières.

The room was still, so heavily shaded that its details were lost in warm shadows splashed by pools of rosy light; so still that at first he thought it empty, until, as his eyes accustomed themselves to the mingling of shades and brilliances, the figure of a woman grew out against the background. He had wondered how she would look. Each time she had been so different. Half a nun in her hospital dress, her high courage overriding the terrors of that flight from Udine; the white-and-black fragility of that evening on the terrace at Fiesoli; this, though gloriously the same, was yet again a different Tamar—the Tamar of the photograph and the stage; the force of her grace almost a shock as she moved forward, seeming to float rather than walk.

"You have come."

"I remembered," Weldon murmured. He raised to his lips the hand she extended.

Something black, white, and globular, which began to resemble a man, de-

tached itself from the background, ambling past them with a bow for Tamar, and for Weldon a glance, coldly insolent as that of a dead fish.

"I take my leave," he smirked, "if mademoiselle permit."

"Mademoiselle most certainly does," said Tamar crisply. "Mademoiselle is tired to death of you and mademoiselle wishes to see her friend. Now *alles donc, vitelement, caro mio*. No, no introductions. Perhaps to-morrow I may let you meet *mon capitain*."

"Truly something to live for. Good night." Even the mask of courtesy could not disguise the sneer as the velvet folds of the curtains dropped behind him.

Weldon turned again to Tamar.

"You needed me?"

She caught the question, answering it with a shrug.

"You strange Americans! You are disappointed to see me in this villa, *non?* You thought perhaps I was ill, in danger, or—how do you say it?—*b-r-r-roke, non?* And yet I am all three and more, more besides. I needed some one, I needed you, to save me from—that!"

Weldon followed her glance to the curtain, still shaking from the man's exit; then again looked his question.

"*Mon chéri*, he would marry me."

"That!" Weldon breathed, incredulously, echoing her own term.

"*Que veux tu?* That is Caraman Picci, prince of the Holy Roman Empire, and of how many unholy ones we will not ask. *Il a du l'or à Gogo*. He reckons his estates by frontiers; he has banks in every capital and jewels *comme Golconda*. This villa is his. Did you then think perhaps it was mine? And—he wants to marry me."

"And so?" Weldon asked.

Like some gorgeous butterfly in her black and orange draperies, she floated away from him, hovering in the shadows between two pools of rosy light. Small,

as a dancer needs must be, exquisitely molded, emanating a subtle sense of appeal, she sank to a sofa, patting the cushions beside her.

"But enough of me. You have come—literally flying to me—and now in your first moments we talk of nothing but—Tamar."

"Because it was to serve Tamar that I came."

"To serve Tamar?" She regarded earnestly, yet with the shade of a smile. "I believe it. That is where you are so different from these others. They would seize Tamar to serve themselves. But you—each time that I met you—let me see, how often was that?"

As his lips parted for eager speech, she checked him with a laugh.

"No, you need not answer. I remember them all. And each time it was to me as if you had opened a door I never knew of and left in a great draft of fresh air. And so—when the doors seemed all closing on me, one by one, I—sent those violets."

"If you but knew the moment at which they came to me!" he exclaimed.

"If you but realized the moment at which I sent them," she sighed. "Caraman on one side, and on the other, Paul."

"Paul? That dancing fellow?" Weldon asked, remembering a brilliant figure that had flashed like a living flame at her side in the ballet.

"The same. Two more doors, each to another life, but each blocked by a man. You alone are the one who have ever opened a way to me and—stood aside for me to pass out."

"And now that I am here?"

She sprang up, moving restlessly about, yet with a certain enjoyment of her own dilemma.

"I do not know. What was it that I hoped for? What was it I expected—who can say? Not I. But—Paul—Caraman. Princess Picci—or to follow

that handsome young demon into that world of his?"

"Suppose I offered you a different path?" asked Weldon. "Suppose I literally flew away with you to-morrow morning?"

"So—and then?"

Rapidly Weldon sketched the situation in New York and Harper's offer to her. It was with a feeling of ridiculousness that he found himself stumbling a little at the thought of Vera, avoiding all mention of her name, angry that he allowed personal feeling still to obtrude in face of the vaster import of the affair. Slight as it had been, Tamar had caught his hesitation, and it was with an added brilliance that she interrupted him.

"And you wish me to help in—just what?"

"To right a world upset."

"A world upset," she mused. Then came a disconcerting flash. "And tell me this, my friend—upset—by whom?"

"The movement is backed by enormous interests," he said, "but the public banner bearer is a—Miss Lawrence."

"Ah, *nous arrivons*," she nodded. "And, this Miss Lawrence—you know her well, *hein*?"

"We were—are—engaged," said Weldon steadily.

"You do not seem quite sure about it," she mocked.

"Who can tell what may happen if this movement of theirs should succeed?"

"And it is to prevent that success that you came to—Tsarskaya." There was a trace of bitterness in her tone as she spoke, and she moved across the room, catching up a wrap. A thing woven entirely of black crystal beads, it hung and clashed about her, enveloping her in its atmosphere of a luxury utterly useless. Looking at her, there came a sharp contrast to Weldon of Vera's efficient daintiness, against this

last word of a daring beyond the dreams of fashion, and yet there was a certain kinship in the two women, after all—the same fire in each, the one devoted to what she thought the good of the world, the other to its pleasure alone.

"Let us go out on the terrace," Tamar murmured rapidly. "This room is suffocating."

Outside, the blue stillness of the night was filled with fragrances of heliotrope and the great waxen trumpets of the daturas. Beyond the terrace, the rock fell sharply away and between the spiky aloes the lights of Monte Carlo twinkled against the blackness of the sea. With a rippling gesture that set her mantle to clashing about her, Tamar drew a breath of sheer enchantment.

"Oh, I love it so—I love it all! And yet, it stifles me."

"Then come away," Weldon pleaded. "Come away in to-morrow's dawn, up and out of it all."

"Up and out," she repeated. "To fly, up, up into the blue air—ah—if only one need never come down again!"

"You will come down in a different world."

"A world that you say is all at odds."

"A world in which you will be the one and only queen."

"Yes, queen for a day," she laughed. "And—when my day is over? Ah, I have seen these queens dethroned; many of them in this last year."

"Your throne is what you are yourself."

"And what am I?" she repeated. "Tsarskaya—yes, but what then is Tsarskaya? Tell me that, if you can, for I can find no answer—not even to what Tsarskaya really wants."

"Come then, and see what this world upset has to offer you."

"And if I do not want it?"

"I will bring you back."

"Back." She flung the word out in a sudden weariness. "It is always this

back—back—that is so wearisome. If one could be sure of never coming back, of always going on—on——”

“To where?”

“Who knows? That is the thing that makes me fear and yet draws me on. After all, *quel dommage!* Wherever one goes it is the same, after all—always men—and always the same Tsarskaya.”

“It is because you are Tsarskaya that we come to you.”

“Yes, I know,” she nodded somberly. Then, without turning her head, she spoke as if to another. “Well, Paul, are you satisfied with your spying?”

Weldon whirled around in amazement. How the fellow had got there without their seeing his approach was impossible to say; the thing was that he was undoubtedly there—a figure scarcely taller than Tamar herself, of a deceiving slimness, bitterly erect, gazing at them from under a level flare of black eyebrows, with all of a boy's passion.

“So you admit that you need to be spied upon?” he said.

“I admit nothing—except that I do not care what you may say or think!” Tamar blazed at him.

“You do not need to admit. I know you.”

Weldon half started to interfere as the young man made a movement, but with an adroit swirl Tamar had eluded it. The swift sureness of their motions alone would have betrayed them both as almost deities of the dance, and, with their words, their looks, it lent the episode an air of dramatic unreality.

“And you—who are you that come here talking of flying in the dawn?” Paul demanded, turning on Weldon.

“What business have you to intrude upon Mademoiselle Tsarskaya's affairs?” Weldon began, but with another flashing motion Tamar was between them, pushing them apart with a hand on each shoulder.

“Idiots both—*tranquillez vous*. Leave Paul to me. After all, we understand each other, he and I, yes?”

Her somberness had fallen from her like a garment; she was enormously more alive and vivid, as if the flagrant drama of the moment had been a wine to her veins. Looking at the two, Weldon could understand that they understood each other; they seemed of almost a different order of beings. It was the man who, scorning the woman's instinctive arts of dissimulation, showed that difference the most. A creature a little less or possibly a little more than human, he looked; a creature of emotion and sheer physical grace, unchained by any considerations of ethics; the same sort of creature that Tamar herself was wont to appear when carried away by the ecstasy of the dance.

“He thinks that he loves me,” she nodded to Weldon, with a disdain that could not hide the underlying triumph.

“I do love you!” cried Paul, entirely unabashed by this frank exposure of his emotions. “Take care that you do not drive me to desperation, you with first your princes and now this American who talks of dawn flights to other worlds—ah——”

He would have launched himself at Weldon, but again Tamar's practiced grasp held him back, and her laugh rang out into the night.

“*Cochon—peste*, be still! Oh, I know what will bring you to your senses—the only thing on this earth that you respect. Listen then, this is a great American manager who has flown here from New York to offer me an engagement.”

“A manager?”

Truly Tsarskaya knew her Paul; the effect of her words was instantaneous. Paul's stillness was a compound of craft, antagonism, and enforced respect.

“But our contract!” he cried. “He must take me, too! It is in black and white that you appear with no other

dancing partner but myself. I will sue——"

"But if I choose to appear alone—what then?" Tamar retorted.

"You cannot. What ballets can a woman do alone?" demanded Paul.

"Scheherazade — Cleopatre — Snow Maiden—how can you do them without me?"

"And The Dragon Fly—*La mort d'un Cygne—Une Nuit d'une Dryade*—what of them?" asked Tamar in mounting shrillness. "They are of my own creation."

"The contract——" Paul persisted.

Weldon saw himself forgotten as, like two children over a toy, these amazing creatures engaged instantly in a purely problematic battle of the ballet, all else forgotten in that strange jealousy of the theater. Yet that again was one of the bonds between them.

"You shall not go!" Paul declared. "I will sue to-night and have a *proces* against your leaving here at all."

"What judge will grant you such at this hour?" Tamar sneered.

Then she went on as if deliberately goading the dancer:

"And what care I for your suit? Before you can bring it I shall be in New York, with the wealth of America at my feet and a tour to follow at what salary I choose. Tamar Tsarskaya, who saved a city! And you, pouf! Little dancing boy, what do they care for a man?"

"You shall never leave, I will prevent it!" Paul cried, beside himself. "I will go to Caraman Picci; he holds Monaco in his pocket."

"He cannot prevent the American seaplane from leaving."

"But he can prevent you from going in it."

Suddenly, as it had begun, the quarrel subsided and Tamar turned to Weldon with an air of helplessness.

"You see—he will do as he says and that fat prince will do it, too. I know them both. What shall we do?"

"Then you will come?" Weldon asked eagerly. "That is, if you can get away?"

"Oh—that—of course," she answered with a shrug. "I meant to all along. The only woman in New York! What dancer would refuse such an offer?"

"And—those other things of which you spoke back there in the salon?" he smiled.

She laughed again, sketching a step or two, light as thistledown, that set the beads to clashing about her.

"Oh, that? Perhaps—perhaps not. Oh, yes, it was true, all of it, at the time; it will be true again, but then, so is all the rest, all that you do not know, as well. That is Tamar—and it is that that I want to fly up and out of—and never come back."

"You will not go without me," Paul persisted sulkily.

"And that, too?" Weldon asked again, filled with a suspicion that her goading quarrel with the other had been but a suddenly conceived plan.

"What can I do?" she shrugged. "I do not know, really—can you not see? Tsarskaya never knows; she is born to charm only and to do that she must never know except what is wanted of her. That is the price we pay for charming—never, never to know what we really want until you tell us."

"We could take him, if that is part of your terms," Weldon said.

"My terms?" Tamar spread her arms in a gesture of resignation. "I have none, as yet. How do I know what I shall want? Promise me that I shall have whatever I ask—those are my terms."

"I can promise you even that," said Weldon, remembering Harper's terse "no limit." Then he added: "And—this fellow? Is he to go?"

"That is in your hands."

Without a motion, Tamar seemed to step out of it all, wrapping herself, by a fling of her mantle, in a crystalline

darkness. Now that the decision was up to him alone, Weldon found himself loath to make it. The woman's pose of complete quiescence, the darkness, and that strangely hectic atmosphere that perpetually envelops Monte Carlo, affected him with a sense of possible consequence. But then, the consequences if Tamar did not come! Either way he found himself facing the unknown, a leap in the dark the only solution, and he threw himself back upon his orders.

"I am told to bring you, at whatever cost."

"And she does not go without me," Paul declared.

"Then—be it so!" Weldon exclaimed, and with the relief of decision came also a sense of irrevocability, and a suspicion, too, that somehow that was what Tamar had determined all along.

It was with a hurried secrecy that the *Skipworth* took off from the tiny yacht harbor in the stillness of the dawn. A few sullen mechanicians, their eyes heavy with sleep; the too-ornate façade of the casino looming wanly through the palms like the face of a woman overtaken by the morning. Then up and away, half an hour through the blue gray of the early morning, and then the sun came out to greet them. Below them the shore line was obscure, in the shadows that precede sunrise, while they floated along in a sunlit world, completely detached from the gloomy etching beneath.

CHAPTER VII.

Never had New York given any one such a wild greeting as Tamar Tsarskaya received when she arrived in the womanless city. Broadway was a sea of heads, the air thick with up-thrown hats, most of which would never return to their owners, as her four-horse barouche and its cordon of mounted police crept slowly through the throng. It was at the intersection

of Fifth Avenue that, by Harper's clever stage management, the carriage was seized by the cheering crowd, the frightened horses led away, and their places taken by some of the best-known figures of the city's life. Amidst a rain of blossoms from the windows on either side, borne as though on the crest of a vast roar of welcome, she swept along, vividly alight, the Queen Eve of that monolithic Eden of a million Adams, until at last the great bronze gates of the most ornate of Fifth Avenue's "palaces" swung to behind her.

Meanwhile, in the drab desert of West Fifty-ninth Street, swept bare of all humanity by the excited suction of Tamar's progress, Weldon was dragging weary footsteps to his own door. Now that the stimulus of the excitement was past, the cumulative fatigue of the protracted flight was crushing down upon him with a weight of depression against which he vainly strove. It was absurd, he knew, but it was with almost bitterness that he collapsed upon the sofa. His usefulness was over now and he saw himself as cast aside, with none to render the attention he really needed. It was moments such as these that most proved the womanless state of the city, and in those chimeras born of fatigue he half reproached himself for having linked with Harper's schemes. The four days' drone of the motors seemed to go on in the pitiless throbbing of his temples until they ached for the soothing of a cool hand.

In the half sleep that enveloped him he had an obsession of some one in the room, and strove against his lethargy to rise, remembering he had left the street door unlatched. Then, suddenly, a delicious coldness was laid across his forehead and a piping slang, vaguely familiar, assailed his ears.

"Take it from me, Napoleon, but I bet dat towel feels good. Dat's like I do for me mother when she has her spells. Say, mister, youse is sure one

of de main guys in dis burg now. De papers been givin' you de tree-sheet screamers dese last few days."

Raising a corner of the wet towel, Weldon adventured with one tired eye. It was that street boy who stood there, hands in pockets, oddly pathetic under his shock of blond hair in spite of a grin of triumphant impudence.

"How the devil——" Weldon began.

"I been watchin' for you," the boy interrupted. "Honest to goodness, mister! It ain't the first time I seen these here heroes get the buck. Just as soon as I gloms me an eyeful of the skirt, I beats it up here, an' I says, 'Johnny Love,' says I—that's me, mister—I'll bet that swell ain't got nobody to look after him."

A bit of human chaff from the streets, blown by the winds of chance, marked by the oversophistication of the curb, but somehow his presence was strangely soothing. With a competence beyond his years he moved about, opening the windows, lowering the shades, easing the shoes from Weldon's feet. That maternal training which he claimed must have been true, for he went about his self-appointed tasks with silent certainty. Before Weldon realized it, a bowl of steaming soup was at his side and it was mainly to cover his surprise that he assumed the privileged gruffness of a man out of sorts.

"For Heaven's sake get me some—no, of course, there isn't any now—make it coffee, then."

"Coffee? With your head! Nonsense!" came the reply with surprising crispness, followed by a quick descent to the argot of the streets. "Say, you must be nuts! Me mudder told me——"

Snatching the towel from his head, Weldon sat up.

"Look here," he accused, "I don't know that I altogether believe in that mother of yours."

"Gee, mister, I got one, honest!" the boy piped.

Across the bowl of steaming soup they faced each other, the pallid urchin, almost artistically ragged, even to the smudgy streak across his insolent nose, mismated shoes tied with string, a baggy coat three sizes too large for him, hands thrust deep into his pockets, but the quizzical sharpness of the gray eyes somehow reminded Weldon of the tumbled towel about his shoulder and the wet hair sticking spikily up from his forehead. It irritated him and that irritation came out in his voice.

"There's something here I don't understand. Who the devil are you?"

"Why, I told you, mister. Me name's Johnny Love, and me mudder——"

"Is Mrs. Love, no doubt," Weldon snapped. "But all the same, you're just a bit too good to be true."

His hand shot out to grasp the frail wrist, but with an adroit step the boy eluded him, backing toward the door, dabbing at his eyes with his battered cap.

"No, no, mister. Don't you go for to hit me. I ain't done nothin', honest."

"Hit you!" Weldon exclaimed in exasperation.

"I been hit cruel since me mudder went away. I thought you might be kind, seein' you know Miss Lawrence and——"

"See here," Weldon broke in, as a suspicion came to him, "did Miss Lawrence send you to me?"

The eyes that looked up at him held the truth of surprise.

"Goodness, no! I—aw, no. She don't know a t'ing about it. Nobody ain't been tellin' me nothin'."

The boy measured the distance to the door and made the dash, pausing there with a recovered jauntiness.

"So far as tellin' goes, it's me as did that. Squint yer eye backward, mister, and see how you and Mr. Harper first come to think o' goin' after this dancin' woman."

He was gone, clattering down the stairs to the street, to be swallowed up in the mazes of New York. Weldon sat down perplexedly, absently attacking the soup the while his mind struggled with a baffling sense of mystery.

Tamar Tsarskaya, at least, in her bronze-ported palace, could not complain of being neglected. It was an important committee which waited upon her, far more potent even than the city government itself—the representatives of a considerable portion of the world's wealth and power. Against them and the self-conscious grandeur of the house she showed as fragile, appealing, as if almost overweighted by the tremendousness of the situation in which she found herself. With oppressive gallantry they sought to convey their innate protectiveness, and it was only Harper who, with his usual inscrutable smile, stood apart, his eyes on the woman in a certain grim humor of understanding. Yet it was to him that she turned.

"But this reception, these crowds, *ça me fait donc presque la peur.*"

A murmured chorus of reassurances rose about her. She smiled her thanks with a wan grace.

"Mademoiselle need have no fear," said Harper dryly. "One so precious to us will be well looked after."

"And now, Miss Tsarskaya," Walwood intervened, "perhaps we might have some understanding as to your terms."

"The terms?" She glanced guilelessly at the men about her, and from his point of retreat Harper could almost see the heads falling before that glance like ripe grain to the sickle. If possible, Tsarskaya's innocence seemed to deepen as, with a tiny gesture of helplessness, she left the question in their hands. "But then what should I ask? Please tell me."

"Any sum," Walwood boldly ventured. Then, after a slight pause: "Er—that is—in—in reason."

3—Ains.

"Oh—money," Tamar murmured, as if the subject wearied her.

"Of course, in fixing the sum, there are many things to be taken into consideration," Pennymaker put in with a glance at the masses of orchids, the piles of boxes on the tables, presents from anonymous adorers or merchants seeking the cachet of her approval. "The receipts of the performance at the Opera House will be handed over to mademoiselle—and every seat has sold at an average of one thousand dollars."

Under Tamar's guilelessness there crept a shade of disdain; there was a flash of almost impishness in the glance she turned to Harper.

"Oh, money!" she murmured. "Money and things—I have had all I want of them for years. I hoped that, in such a strange situation, I should be able to ask something—*ah, ciel!*—a little different."

"Mademoiselle can have whatever she asks. We have given our word for that," Harper said gravely.

Tamar rose, floating about the room with that inimitable grace that caused all heads to turn to follow her.

"Whatever I ask! Surely no woman was ever in such a situation before! A whole city, one of the greatest of the earth, into which she can plunge her hands and draw forth whatever she desires—and—*hélas!* I find I do not know what I want. But it must be—oh, something that no woman ever dared to ask before; something *épatant*—daring—something—well, worthy of Tsarskaya."

A silence of uneasiness settled down on the committee. Each looked at the others with some furtiveness, as if questioning whether the remedy might not prove as desperate as the disease. Whichever way they turned they found themselves confronted by the incalculable feminine. As she gazed at them, Tsarskaya burst into a ripple of laughter.

"Ah, you strange Americans, no won-

der your women leave you! You know so little of how to manage us. Whatever I ask! And you leave it to me to decide. As if any woman ever knew what she wanted! It is on you we depend to tell us that."

She turned to Harper as if, in some psychic fashion, she divined him to be the strongest of those present.

"Monsieur, will you not suggest?"

"First of all, there is the question of mademoiselle's partner," he said, his eyes steadily on hers. "What amount do we pay for his part in the performance?"

"Paul?" she queried idly, though a smile wreathed her lips at the name. "I will settle that. Whatever I pay, we shall fight over it, of course, he and I. That is part of the life. But we understand each other; how should we not?"

"And for yourself?" he went on. "Something daring, eh? Something worthy even of Tsarskaya, whose other name is caprice." He pondered a moment, still considering her, then came a grim amusement. "Well, why not let your terms be: whatever man you choose, of all the men in New York—any man on whom your choice may light, provided he be not accompanied by wife, sweetheart, sister, or mother—for your husband."

A silence, thick with the protests choked by astonishment, and across it the delighted clap of Tamar's hands, a brilliant peal of her laughter.

"Oh—*épatant!* Any man I choose! Monsieur, I bow to you."

She sank to the ground before Harper in a curtsy of mocking admiration, then rose again, alight with mischief as she looked at the perturbed men about her.

"Not even Tsarskaya herself would have thought of that or quite dared it. But now that I have heard it—messieurs, you have my terms. Any man in New York, not protected from

this terrible me by the presence of his wife, sweetheart, or mother—for my husband!"

Half-frightened girl, little great lady alike were gone, and it was some brilliant humming bird who darted about the room, instinctively seeking expression in pirouettes.

"La, la, la! Monsieur, you have saved Tsarskaya from falling beneath herself. Whom then shall I choose?"

In bubbling mischief she faced the disconcerted committee, smiling with delicious malice as each important respectability winced at her direct gaze.

"Shall it be one of you, then? Oh, pouf—do not look so frightened! I do not yearn to be one of your wives—all stuffed and varnished like your terrible furniture. Poor things, they are what you have made of them! I do not wonder that they leave you. But you, monsieur"—she whirled again on Harper—"prenez garde donc. Have you no fears?"

"Alas, not even hopes, mademoiselle," smiled Harper.

She looked at him long, suddenly extending to him a hand over which he bent and which he raised to his lips. It was with almost a sigh, a slight chilling, as of some premonition, that she spoke again, her words echoing plaintively through the too vast, too gorgeous room.

"No, you are right. And yet you would have made me happier, I think, than the way I am going."

In a scorch of scorn she turned to that important committee.

"Do not be afraid, gentlemen. Oh, I know what you thought: Tsarskaya, a dancing woman—and each of you so conscious of your position and your millions. Bah, Tsarskaya has refused kings, when there were such. I do not wonder that your women have gone. All I wonder is that they stayed so long. Did you think I would submit myself to the insult of choosing? Tsarskaya—

yes, a woman, yes, and one who must be won. I assure you, gentlemen, that my future husband was chosen before I left Europe. This is a little joke that I will play—a joke on all your great, proud New York. For a day or two I will hold it in my hands, and when my choice is announced, we shall see who will laugh."

It was Harper who lingered a moment behind the rest as the relieved committee filed out. Raising her hands again to his lips, he spoke.

"Will you permit me to tell you that you are not only very beautiful, but also very brave?"

"Yes, you like me now—while I play your game for you," she answered with some bitterness.

"It is your own game, too, or you would not play it," he retorted.

"Is it?" she asked. "I wonder. And let me tell you, monsieur, that if all these others were like you there would be no game here to-day, nor need of a Tsarskaya to play it for you."

Hand in hand they stood, and over each settled a shadow of wistfulness as they gazed.

"I said I had no hopes," Harper resumed. "I have only a heart, one that loves and has loved for many years. Otherwise——"

"And I, too, have a heart," she echoed. "A heart that must go where it will, even against my own knowledge. Otherwise—au revoir, my friend."

"Always that," he said, and left her.

It was late that evening that Harper summoned Weldon to his hotel. As the younger man, refreshed by long sleep, entered the suite, he found Harper at a desk which was piled with what seemed to be circulars.

"Excuse me if I seem to be working you too hard, Weldon," he said, "but I am sending flyers to all the women's camps to-morrow and I wondered if you would care to undertake Redding—since Miss Lawrence is there."

"Will it do any good?" Weldon asked. "The time for that sort of 'good' is past," Harper replied. "Your task will be merely to fly over the camp and let fall these circulars."

He handed one and Weldon read:

WOMEN OF NEW YORK!

Do you know that

TAMAR TSARSKAYA

The Enchantress of Emperors
is in New York

and will give a performance at

THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE

to-morrow evening,

after which, by her agreement with

THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC
SAFETY

she can choose

Any Man in the Island of Manhattan
as

HER HUSBAND

Unless his wife, fiancée, mother,
or sister returns to him before midnight
on that date?

WHOM WILL SHE CHOOSE?

"That is authentic?" gasped Weldon.

"Absolutely."

"But——"

"There are no buts in the matter," Harper cut tersely in. "All that I require of you is to know if you wish to go to Redding or not."

"But that thing, thrown among those thousands, probably most of them in a highly-nervous condition—it is enough to produce a panic in the camps," Weldon protested.

"The women did not hesitate to produce a panic in New York and throw the men into a condition of equal nervousness," said Harper grimly. "Do you go or shall I send some one else?"

"You say you think Miss Lawrence is at Redding?" Weldon asked.

"We have known that she was there all the time."

"Then your sending me up there to try and find her whereabouts——"

"Was an experiment—which failed."

"And your sending me to-morrow?"

"Is as much to get you out of the city for a while as anything."

"Why?"

Frankly, my boy, I do not quite know—except that we are dealing with women, which means that we don't know anything about it at all. Do you go?"

"Yes, Weldon answered.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Weldon who took off from Mineola in the gusty chill of the next morning was a different man from the one who had eagerly nosed his plane up off the ground for the same journey only a few days before. On either side of him, as he taxied from the line, gloomy ships spat and coughed as they warmed up for a dash to one or another of the women's camps, to scatter Harper's folders. Weldon had a sense of having at last reached the point where it seemed that open betrayal of Vera must be his next move. Several times, as the motor warmed up, he almost relinquished his place in the cockpit. But then another would take his place; he would have accomplished nothing by doing this, and he would lose a chance for a glimpse of Vera.

Unevenly the plane teetered across bumps in the fitful air. Weldon "ironed them out" with the rudder, cursing the while the day, the ship, and the lot that had given him this ignominious rôle to play. As he turned out of the head wind that swept down the Sound and winged his way up into the hills, he kept searching his mind for a third way out of the dilemma that presented itself in the two alternatives, betrayal of Vera or an impotent and senseless betrayal of Harper.

All too soon the camp slid beneath him. He glided down, flying back and forth scarcely a hundred feet above the barracks. As he had expected, the

drone of his motor brought forth an excited crowd of women from the buildings beneath him. The leaflets he was to distribute were behind him in the little compartment between the cockpit and the turtle back, out of the way of the controls. But he did not reach for them. In the tension of his mind all determination seemed lost and he found himself scanning the shifting throng in a desperate hope for a sight of the woman whose real victory, if Harper were to be trusted, could come only by her defeat.

If he could but talk with her once more; if he might only warn her of the inevitable! It was not too late even now if she would forget her pride and bow to her conquerors. A dream, he feared. Vera would go down fighting rather than forsake for a moment her determination to see the thing through. But still, if he might only try!

Mounting again, he spied two figures hurrying across a field from the glen. Eagerly he swung his plane over that way. Yes, one was Vera. Without sensible thought his muscles caught the impulse and he nosed down. The field was small, but in the strong wind that blew from Redding Ridge he could have landed in a corral. He shut off the motor and settled slowly, almost straight down. Gently the ground came up to meet him and, as it touched the wheels and tail skid, the plane rolled scarcely its own length and stopped nearly at Vera's side.

In obedience to her word, Vera's companion had left her and it was alone that she received Weldon. The tension of the meeting was upon them both as each, unconscious of how the strain of the last few days manifested itself, noted its evidences in the other. Vera was thinner, finer, a more transparent shell for her exaltation of purpose.

"I knew that you would come again," she said, before Weldon could even greet her.

"Hopeless as it is, I had to make a last appeal," he answered, and a faint smile curved her lips.

"A last appeal, by Mr. Harper's orders?"

"It is in disobedience to Harper's orders that I landed," he defended himself.

"The trouble with Mr. Harper's orders is that one never knows but that disobedience may have been intended."

"You credit him with subtlety," replied Weldon. Then came a harsh laugh at his own expense. "And me with——"

"You are honorable, at least, Bobby," she answered wearily, "and as for Haldane Harper, he is the only man on all your side whom I really fear."

She stood there, a figure of ice about a living flame, a flame which had nothing to do with the body that it had seized, making it merely an instrument to its own superpurposes. A feeling of tremendous separation came upon Weldon as he gazed at her, and in an effort to bridge that he sought to take her away from the too wide and glaring openness of that spot.

"We can't talk here," he entreated. "I feel as if all the world were watching and listening."

"Have you anything to say that the world may not hear?"

"I am jealous of the very sky when I talk to you."

A faint remembrance of the old color suffused her cheeks at that and she suffered him to lead her down to the shadows of the pine trees on the lip of the glen. She seated herself on a bed of their fragrant needles. He flung himself beside her. For a few moments they were silent, held by the magic of morning and the murmur of the waters below them. Insensibly the tension of her hands relaxed and Weldon felt that in a few moments it would be the Vera he had known who would be sitting there by his side instead of

this stranger who seemed to have taken her place, a wrapped priestess of a shrine at which he could not worship. She felt the softening herself and, catching its danger, she spoke.

"Well, what is it that Haldane Harper told you to say?"

"Whatever I have to say is from my own heart," he declared, "and I cannot return till it is spoken."

"Whatever it is, I can give you the answer now," she replied, "and it is no; no a thousand times, until our battle is won."

"But it is already won," he urged. "The general strike in New York, the threatened class war, has died down in the unity of both sides in demanding only the return of the women. Washington will give you guarantees of immunity."

"Ah, but on our side, the issue has grown! Blind that we were, our withdrawal was only a step in the dark, but a step toward the light, at least, and since that step the vision has come to some of us. Do you think that after this we can go back to that horrible slavery of sex?"

"But great heavens, Vera! What are you proposing—to upset the balance of nature?"

In vehemence Vera sprang to her feet.

"To upset it? No! To restore it to that equality which nature determined. Oh, I thought I knew things before; I thought that in my social work I had heard every story that could be told. But up here, with their oppressions removed—oh, the things that I have heard from even the women of what we used to call our own set!"

"And yet you can hardly restrain them from returning to it," said Weldon quietly.

"How did you know that?" The gasping quickness of her breath was proof of how his shot had told, but she found that he could hardly say in what

manner he had come by that knowledge.

"It was while I was flying over the camp just now," he began gropingly. "I can't explain it, but up there in the air we seem to get things—atmospheres, perhaps, as if the people below sent up invisible clouds of themselves that could only rise so high and hang there like a sort of gathering storm, ready to come down on them again; and over that camp just now——"

He stretched out his arms, as if trying to grasp from the air the words he needed. There was that same sense of an almost terrible potency which he had noticed in his previous visit to the camp. He seemed to feel it again as he flew above that veritable woman warren of a place, a sort of psychic thundercloud, charged with flashes of possible hysteria, awaiting only a touch to short-circuit it back again in a wave of feminine panic.

"After all, they love," he finished.

"Love," she echoed in a bleak weariness. "The most horrible trap of all."

"Vera——"

Her gesture brought silence. The eyes she turned upon him had lost their luster like breathed-on crystals. The sharp pallor of her mouth betrayed the strain beneath it.

"I know what you would say, Bobby, and I admit it all. Oh, yes, I too have felt the jaws of that trap closing on me. I felt it with you; the insidious sweetness of it, the drugging relief of surrender, all the baits used to lead one in until the trap is sprung in all its hideous irrevocability."

"But surely it is on its motherhood that the race depends," he argued.

"Its motherhood," she breathed, as if the words had blown the torch within her to a brighter, clearer flame. "That is just the vision that has come to me, a real noble motherhood, not the horrible bondage of which I have heard so much in these last days. And it is

to gain that that I will, if necessary, spread my crusade until every woman in the country has come with us apart."

"And even now, with scarcely more than a week gone, you are at your wits' end to hold them," Weldon said. "You can't do it, Vera. You can't dam back the forces of nature. Bad though conditions may be, still they want them. And when they read this——" He drew from his pocket one of Harper's folders and extended it toward her. "It was to distribute these that I came here, but I found I could not do it."

She regarded it without putting out a hand to receive it.

"I have already seen that." Then, at his glance of surprise, she went steadily on. "I received one this morning by special messenger, and written across it was the information that Mademoiselle Tsarskaya privately informed the committee that she had chosen her husband before leaving Europe."

Weldon stared in amazement. A confused vision of Caraman Picci flashed before him. But Vera's next words brought an added light.

"I realized its import, of course—'any man in New York!' The only men in New York who were with her in Europe are those who accompanied her flight. Oh——" She flung out her hands in superb disdain. "Go and tell Haldane Harper that his subtleties have failed again."

"I see what you mean, Vera, but I assure you I knew nothing of it," said Weldon quietly. "Not a word, not a thought of mine has been disloyal to you. You alone have held my heart."

His tone was truth itself and she broke a little, half fending him off.

"Then, take it back before it is too late," she begged of him. "These last weeks have taught me how impossible it is for me *ever* to go that path."

"Is that final, Vera?"

"It must be, Bobby."

There was silence between them, so

long that he turned, half blindly, to leave. But her voice recalled him.

"You say you came here to distribute these circulars? Where are they?"

"Back there in my ship."

"Then I will take them and distribute them for you," she declared proudly. "I will show Mr. Harper that we women are not so easily wrought upon as he thinks."

"Vera, I warn you, there is danger!"

Helplessly again Weldon sought for words, feeling them fall back impotently, unuttered, before the adamant of her almost fanatic faith.

"Those women"—he gestured toward the camps—"I warn you, that's a powder magazine and the most chance sparks may produce—"

It was useless, he knew. He raged inwardly at those chains of chivalry which prevented his using the strength which alone could prevail against her. To carry her off to the plane, then up and away, out of it all, was his desire, but her very weakness was her strength.

Through his silence she felt her advantage and pressed it.

"It is the last thing I shall ask of you, Bobby," she murmured. "Surely you will not refuse me this?"

"The last, Vera?"

She extended her hands to him, then, drawing him close, she brushed his forehead with her lips.

"If only all were like you! We had a beautiful dream, but it cannot be. The light has broken too brightly on me; the dream is gone, and I must follow the path of the new morning."

"Where will that path lead you, Vera? That is what I fear."

"Wherever it leads I must follow it, even though I knew it led to death itself."

It was not till long after midnight that Weldon set his plane down in the glare of the flood lights at Mineola.

Having successfully zoomed from the little field within the Redding camp and made his way down toward Norwalk, he was compelled to land by an electric storm, over which he did not dare to try to force the low-powered J. N. 4, and it was not till late at night that he had been able to resume flight.

As dawn was graying on the streets he swung along Fifty-ninth to the silent house. Mercifully too tired for thought, sleep was upon him almost before he had closed his eyes.

Not until well into the afternoon did he awake, and then his freshened faculties brought upon him the pain of Vera's decision. Long he sat, going over in weary reiteration each detail of their parting, and he saw now that it had really taken place on that evening two weeks before when he had listened to her speech at the Opera House. It was strange that the place in which at the bidding of one woman he had watched the first act of this great comedy should this evening be the setting for what he felt would be the final act, for the playing of which he himself had brought another woman, a woman who, if rumor spoke truly—but he would not think of that.

The shadows outside were lengthening when there came a sharp rap on his door. Stumbling to open it, he was confronted by the oddly familiar figure of the street boy. Without greeting, the urchin slipped in, impudently the same, even to the smudge across his elfin face.

"I t'ought so," he nodded, surveying Weldon. "I'll bet y' y'ain't had yer breakfast yet. Me mudder always says men ain't got sense to look out fer theirselves. Aw, go sit down while I rustle the eats."

A tuneless shrilling from the kitchenette, a clatter of pans, followed by the pungent odor of coffee.

"When do you eat yourself?" demanded Weldon, when the tray was

placed before him. Searchingly he looked at the lad. The pallor was not that of ill health nor the frailness from lack of nourishment.

This time his grasp was too quick for the wrist to elude it, and he drew the shrinking, ill-clad form toward him.

"We're due for an explanation, you and I, my lad," he said. "You happen in too opportunely, just when I need you."

Though the eyes tried to stare boldly into his, they had lost their impudence. The wrist was trembling oddly in his grasp.

"I—I ain't got nobody in the hull city," the boy muttered, "and you was kind to me."

"Very sweet indeed," said Weldon relentlessly. "One might almost suspect you of reading the children's magazines. But it won't quite do. Now then——"

His grasp had tightened again. A strangled cry caused him to loose it; then a twist, and the next moment the boy was regarding him from the vantage of the door, with a return of his triumphant impishness.

"Youse t'inks I'm a Rollo boy, do you? Say, mister, t'row me a pill an' you'll see." There followed an impertinent pantomime of lighting an imaginary cigarette, a cock of the too-large cap over one ear.

"Well, so long, mister. I'll meet youse at de opra to-night. Better hurry wid de soup an' fish or youse'll be late."

A slam of the door and, before Weldon could reach it, the whistling clatter down the stairs. As usual, the urchin's advice had been uncannily opportune. The thought of Tamar's triumphant performance was distasteful to him, but he grimly determined that he would see this appalling tragi-comedy through to its end.

From outside, the great opera house was like a fortress besieged, a huge rock beaten upon by a human sea. Within

the foyer seemed for a moment as usual, then the unrelieved masculinity of its crowd became almost ridiculous. The beauty of life had gone with the departure of the women; the temple of the muses might have been handed over to a political convention. Worst of all to Weldon were the glances that followed him and the whispers he caught as he passed. With burning ears he realized that those absurd rumors of Tamar's choice were almost public property.

"Ah, our Adonis of the air," came a voice and, turning, Weldon encountered the glassy glare of Ashfield's eloquent monocle.

"Let me look at you," the other went on, standing off from Weldon, gazing at him as if he were an old master. "But really, you seem human, after all."

"Is there any reason——" Weldon began with a slight edge of danger, but the other went airily on.

"You'll have to go through it, my boy, and I shall be more artistic about it than the others. Think of the abhorrent thumbs you are escaping. I, at least, shan't dig you in the ribs. The distinction between apes and men—the only distinction sometimes—is thumbs and laughter. Perhaps that is why they so often go together."

"And the subject of the joke?" asked Weldon icily.

"Is it possible that you are not aware?" asked Ashfield in amazement. Then, in a flight of florid fancy: "Once Venus made her transits with the flight of doves. Now she seems to do her hunting with seaplanes. Remember, my boy, and beware of the fate of Adonis."

"Who the Adonis may be I have no idea," replied Weldon, "but there is, at least, no doubt as to the identity of the boar."

For once Ashfield had no reply, and Weldon pursued his way to the mystic region of "behind the scenes." As

the iron door closed between him and the auditorium, he came face to face with Harper. He would have passed on, but, with that unshakeableness that always made him seem so much larger than he really was, the elder man arrested him.

"So you have returned from Redding, Weldon—and alone. Well, you can't expect to bring two goddesses down from the sky."

Weldon's nerves snapped and it was in menace he whirled upon the other.

"Mr. Harper, in matters of national import I have obeyed orders, but, by Jove!—my private affairs shall be my own!"

"Unfortunately for you, your private affairs have also become matters of national import," said the other. "Did Miss Lawrence send no message to me?"

"Only this, that your damned subtleties were of no avail."

Bulking in the passageway against the lights of the stage, Harper regarded him somberly.

"Crudities rather; I never waste subtleties on a woman, Weldon. But whatever they may have been, believe me, they were designed only to serve Miss Lawrence."

"Of so little avail were they that after I had refused to distribute your accursed circulars she undertook to distribute them herself."

For once Harper's habitual calm broke in a strange anxiety.

"She did—she is remaining there! Good heavens, and I sent that one on purpose that she might receive it first! There is a wireless telephone station on the roof here. I must go at once and give orders. We have half a regiment at Danbury. Perhaps they can get guards over to the camp in time."

He hurried away and Weldon, wearily aware of a new and vague anxiety, stepped on to the stage.

CHAPTER IX.

Tamar and Paul were already there, waiting in the wings for the rising of the curtain, through which the strains of the orchestra came muffled and far away. Lacking the throngs of its usual opera company, the gaudy crowds of chorus, ballet, and extras, the orderly confusion of a great production, the enormous stage showed bare, gloomy, stretching away in increasing darkness from the spot glowing with iridescent lights, closed in by the set; a few stage hands moving in the gloom, one or two shirt-fronted personages clad in that air of superciliousness which always seems to accompany officials of the opera. The sacred precincts of "behind" were evidently closely guarded, for besides Harper only a scant handful of the committee of public safety were to be seen.

The place oppressed Weldon afresh. There was something almost sinister in its untenanted shadows, through which loomed the canvas-covered forms of strange theatrical machines. Even the increased burst of music as the curtain rose, the roar of applause that rolled over the footlights as Tamar bounded on to the stage, could not eradicate that impression. There was almost menace in that enormous volume of sound, something too suggestive of the roar of great waters as a weakened dam gives way.

It came again and again as the dance concluded and the curtain rose and fell in quick succession. Tamar, bowing and smiling before the footlights, dwarfed to miniature by distance and the towering scenery, might have been some exquisite doll caught up again and again by those waves of sound. It was long before they let her go; then, laughing, breathless, a cloak thrown over her ballet dress, she ran by, casting a hasty sentence to Weldon as she passed.

"Ah, it is you! Come to the dressing room—I shall need you."

The committee, clustered like flies outside the closed door, glowered enviously as it opened to Weldon's knock. The room, its usual bareness hidden by rich hangings, was hot, glaring with light, oppressive with the scent of masses of flowers. Every chair and table, even the floor, was littered with expensive-looking packages, while others, torn hastily apart, spilled costly contents: garments of almost inconceivable daintiness; trifles of such luxury as only the mind of woman can dream; gleaming jewels.

And in their midst Tamar, still wondrously cloaked, on her face the added glow of subtle stage artifice, in her glance, her laugh, her every gesture, a glazing recklessness of delight.

"Ah, this is almost terrible!" she exclaimed, as she extended him her hands. "That house—all men, without a woman to restrain them—never have I faced such a thing before. They would eat one up like wild beasts that one must tame, but yet—I would not have missed it—no!"

A quick motion, and the golden fabric of her cloak caught in one of those open boxes, dashing it to the floor. Like a gleaming snake, a string of priceless pearls rolled out from it.

"Who sent you those?" asked Weldon, as he stooped to pick them up.

With a shrug she took them from him, flung them carelessly back upon the table.

"*Chi lo sa?* There are so many of all kinds—I like the emeralds the best—some without even cards."

"You are beginning to know what it means to be the only woman in New York," Weldon smiled.

"Ah, but I am not!" she exclaimed. "It was strange. There was a note handed in to me from the stage door, asking admission behind the scenes for 'the other woman in New York.'"

"Who was she?" Weldon wondered, but there came a shrug of mystery.

"That would be telling you too much. Suffice it to say, she was cleverly disguised. It almost deceived me for a moment—almost."

A rap on the door. She flew to open it. A bunch of orchids, the price of which might have ransomed a score of lives, was handed in. As she tossed it aside, a package rolled out marked with the name of New York's greatest jeweler, but she did not even stoop to pick it up. A roar as of distant thunder shook the building and with a smile she turned to Weldon.

"You hear? It growls, that beast out there. It is impatient for a sight of me again. Ah, to think what I could do! Keep it waiting just a moment too long and it would come pouring over the footlights a thousand strong, ready to tear this building apart, seeking—me! But I am not ready for that yet and so— Wait here while I change."

In a flash she was gone, pulling aside a curtain that masked the door to some inner sanctum. Weldon stood there, vaguely disturbed by her exaltation, this riot of too great, too unregarded luxury all about them. A woman riding on the crest of a wave that soared to unnatural heights, under the lash of unnatural conditions. Something of that same fear which he had felt for Vera at the camp came upon him; the same desire to seize this woman, bear her up and away to some clearer, saner atmosphere—a menace of repression at the camp; here in the opera house the threat of a too unbridled outpouring.

Without the preliminary of a knock, the door burst open and Paul flashed in, a bizarre figure with a cloak of thin black over the painted seminudity of his attire for the *Nuit d'une Dryade* which was to be their next number. With his flare of black brows, the brooding sullenness of his gaze, the gilded horns of a faun sprouting from his forehead, he seemed almost a creature of a different life.

"So it is you!" he accused.

"Have you any objections?"

The acid of Weldon's retort was like explosive to Paul's anger and it leaped like the flare of a bursting shell.

"You! You, the great manager! You, the one she chose before ever she left Europe! You think that you are to have her, eh, have all this and her besides? You, to have her—her—while I—"

It seemed that in another moment he would launch himself, and Weldon was quietly bracing for the attack when the door of the inner room flew open and Tamar stood there. The spirit of the flame tree she had chosen to represent in coruscating draperies that, with every motion, parted to show glimpses of exquisite limbs, while above her head towered a coronet of coral blooms.

"*Eh, quoi donc*—oh, la, la, la," she laughed. The silver of her mirth rippled through the room. "What is this?"

"This man," Paul flared, "they tell me you intend to choose him!"

"And if so, what is it to you?"

"He shall never have you! It is I—I—who love you, who have loved you these years!"

"And must poor Tsarskaya belong to all who love her?" she mocked. "This whole city loves me to-night, and out of them shall choose—"

"Choose, yes, and I know that your choice is already written." He seized her arm, indicating a heavy bracelet on her wrist. "Written—and his name is on the paper you slipped under the spring. Do you dare deny it, that you mean to choose him?"

"I deny nothing," she taunted; then came a softer, more smiling glance, "except that I shall choose—the one I really love!"

"He shall never have you!" Paul blazed, and her spirit leaped like an answering flame.

"Who will prevent?"

"I—I—I!"

Paul had her in his grasp now, but the flash of Tamar's eye forbade Weldon to interfere. He seemed somehow apart from it; they were so matched, those two, whirling in the vortex of their own emotions, the man threatening as some thundercloud potent with lightnings, the woman recklessly goading him in sheer enjoyment of her power. In them both there was that which seemed older than the world itself. The too great lavishness of that background, the extraordinary richness of the gifts spread about in disregarded profusion, lent the scene a strange air of unreality. It resembled too much a bit from one of their dramatic ballets, raised almost to the intensity of another dimension.

It was the sound of the buzzer that broke in upon them. At its summons they automatically collected themselves for the stage. Not until they were in the wings did Paul speak again. Then, flinging off his cloak behind the canvas fretwork of a fantastic tree, he turned to Weldon.

"Remember, I have sworn you shall not have her!"

There was so much that Weldon wished to say, but with that coil of strange circumstance tightening about him, he found himself unable to open his lips. Mistaking his silence for antagonism, Paul went hotly on.

"Whatever the name that she slipped into the bracelet, which she is to hand to your Harper to read, I swear to you that it is with me, and with me alone, that she will leave the Opera House to-night. Do you think I have not ways? What do you, in your little, narrow outlook, know of such as we?"

Standing there in his nudity and barbaric paint, he brought again that sense of an intruder from some other more strange region. It was as if he had for an instant lifted the edge of a curtain, permitting a momentary vista of unsuspected spaces.

The rest of the evening was a sort of torture to Weldon, a period of gray oppression, shot through with moments of almost unbelievable beauty, as dance succeeded dance, each bringing down a more thunderous roar from that thousand-headed monster seemingly held at bay by the glaring line of the footlights. It was in the hush of waiting for the last number, that hauntingly exquisite *Bacchanale de la Mort* with which Tamar had chosen to conclude her program, that Weldon, nervously pacing the back of the stage, saw Harper approaching him. Whether it was those macabresque strains of the prelude, coming through the curtain, or whether it was something in the older man's bearing, Weldon could not say, but he found himself chilling as with the stricture of a cold hand about his heart. The other's touch upon his shoulder was as a burden of lead.

"My boy—God knows I did my best! If I had only known sooner—but I have had news from Redding.

"Vera," Weldon tried to say, but all he could produce was a strangled whisper.

"The women broke," Harper went hoarsely on. "They are breaking from all the camps. We had special trains waiting, and in half an hour the first of them will be here. But at Redding where—"

"Vera," Weldon heard himself croaking again.

"She tried to hold them." Harper threw up his hands in a hopeless admiration. "Some sort of a bridge, they tell me, across a stream. But they—a mob of women beyond hearing, beyond reason—they simply came right on—the rail gave way and she—"

In the silence that followed Harper's words, Weldon stood there stunned. He had a feeling that this, together with all these events of the past two weeks, was just some horrible dream from which he must presently awake.

The dim stage with its glowing strip of light and color; the ridiculous committee with the black backs of so many crows; Tamar, floating across from her dressing room radiantly reveling in the growl from that monster audience beyond the curtain, avid for another sight of her—it all seemed to him just a picture, such as dreams are made of. But gradually, as if woven in by the tragic strains that now and then broke through the lilting prelude of the dance, another picture seemingly as real formed before his affronted eyes.

The murmur of pines and green branches dancing in the sun; a rustic bridge above a stream that brawled over its boulders; Vera, in the white fire of her high purpose—oh, truly, as Harper had said on that very stage, she was of the stuff of martyrs. Those women—though he pressed his hand to his face to shut them out, he could see them coming on in a living wave, lashed by the relentlessness of panic.

Dully he felt Harper's hand on his shoulder, heard the murmur of the elder man's attempted speech. Yet the very suddenness of the blow had been also its mercy. Later on he would suffer—horribly; but for the present he seemed to have been struck apart from it all, able only to stand and look on. Paul, in bacchanalian vine leaves, crossing to that strip of terrible publicity, in his hands the crystal goblet that was to be the climax of the dance; an instant of stillness as the orchestra hushed and the curtain wavered aloft, then the blare of cymbals as the two figures bounded on to the stage and were swept up in the dizzy eddies of the music. Vera gone—what was it Harper was saying?—"nothing to be done." Of course not, that was the terrible part of it! Vera gone—the memory of her kiss like a scorching brand upon his forehead, and he himself standing here like an automaton upon this stage, waiting the caprice of that extraordinary woman

out there being tossed aloft like some brilliant bubble in the phosphorescent surges of the music.

A terrific thing, that *Bacchanale de la Mort*, with its story of a poignancy of joy that was its own destruction, its whirl of flame-colored draperies, young limbs too delicious ever to feel the touch of decay. Caught in those strains of a fearful joy the dancers leap and bound, pelting each other with blood-red roses under great clusters of glowing grapes, until at last, lest life might hold for them no other moment so intense, they drink the poisoned goblet and at that exalted instant sink together to refuge in the arms of death.

Beyond the proscenium arch the huge audience bated its breath before that torrent of life that was Tamar Tsarskaya. And ever at her side was Paul, his eyes, usually so black, lit by a blue and feral glare.

Tamar Tsarskaya, a torrent of life—Vera, a white flame of purpose, and, across that bridge, women in a torrent of death. In Weldon's numb brain that terrible music of the orchestra seemed spinning a pattern in which those two were woven into the warp of his life with glittering strangeness.

Paul, upholding the goblet; Tamar prostrate at his feet, panting for its draft, and on her wrist the bracelet that held the secret of that hideous mockery of her choice. Vera—never could Weldon see her again, except as on that bridge! Tamar—suppose that were indeed his own name hidden in that golden circlet?

They had drunk of the goblet now; softly the orchestra throbbed to its finish as amidst a breathless hush the curtain slowly hid the stage. Then the storm broke loose, shaking the solid fabric of the place, and again and again the painted drop rose and fell, but with exquisite art neither of the dancers stirred from the abandon of feigned death.

It was difficult to tell the first moment of that premonition, the first stilling of that orgy of acclaim from out in front, but once it came, its grip was instant. A moment and it was not, another moment and it was there, a cold and insidious thing that seemed to stare separately into each face, arresting in mid-air the hands upraised for frantic applause. Behind the scenes it spread, sending the curtain down with a lumbering crash. It was Harper who was first upon the tinsel paganism of the scene, with Weldon half consciously at his side. With parted lips Tamar lay, her head on Paul's breast, both still, a tangled treasure of limbs in quiescent relaxation. There was no need to touch them or even to bend too closely; the crashed goblet told its tale, its crystal fragments exhaling a bitter odor of almonds.

Vera! Tamar! Flame of coral; the terrible eyes of women; a sunlit bridge, and jeweled death; Paul, like some beautiful changeling gliding to the winds with his goblet of fate. Dimly there came back to Weldon a remembrance of his threat—"when she leaves the opera house to-night it will be with me."

Black-coated figures crowded about them, faces shocked, pallid, or marked by ghoulish relish of tragedy, but the hands of all alike held at bay by the sheer beauty of those two figures so still under the painted grapes. Then Harper reverently bent and slipped from Tamar's outflung wrist the bracelet in which she had secreted the name of her choice. All knew its significance, and the silence deepened as he unfolded the paper.

Harper started in almost unbelief, and there was an infinite pity in his voice as he read the name she had inscribed—"Paul."

Paul! Weldon breathed in an almost agony of relief. His hands were clean of this, at least. Paul! Looking

at the two in that still embrace, he began to understand. Mates they had been, each marked by that something which seemed to go beyond the world of mere men; mates they would continue in whatever fantastic world it might be to which Paul had carried her in their desperate leap from that pinnacle of joy.

A slight figure, grayly shabby, trying to push its way through the ring of silent men—with a dull amazement Weldon saw it was that unaccounted urchin who called himself by the name of Love.

"Get back!" he whispered harshly, his hand closing on the frail shoulder. "This is no place for a boy."

"For a boy, no," came the surprising answer, "but the only place for the only other woman in New York!"

Steadily the eyes looked up into his, deeply gray, fathomless as the ocean, and with the same promise of hidden wonders in their depths. With a shock of memory Weldon recognized them as those of Elsie Haight—Elsie Haight, whose future, by the circumstances of the drama they had shared, was inextricably bound up with his own.



SO little that it is almost nothing," is, freely translated, the French name for milady's newest smoke—which is good for one long, lingering puff—and then —*il est fini!* Made of the best blends of Turkish tobacco and the shiniest of gold tips, and all done up in an attractive package tied with gold cord, these tiny cigarettes are dainty tidbits for the rosy lips of *les femmes jolies*.



AT night the streets, the fashionable clubs and restaurants, and the theaters of Rio de Janeiro are aglitter with precious stones, especially diamonds. For at the present time the women of Rio probably lead the world in the wearing of jewels. With every wave of small, white hands there is the flash of diamonds, and so many bracelets and ropes of precious gems circle the arms and necks of the fair Brazilian women that the most décolleté of gowns takes on an aspect of decorum. If the fair ones continue to adorn themselves so heavily, it will not be long before they will be forced to discover more places to wear their costly trappings.



LADIES' hand bags, like many another article of feminine finery, were first used by the sterner sex. The earliest examples of elaborately embroidered, and at the same time useful, hand bags were carried by priests, kings, and princes of Babylon, according to the Scriptures. Later on fashionable ladies of Greece and Rome carried—or had statuesque slaves carry for them—small receptacles, like modern sewing boxes, which often held, in addition to classic aids to beauty, a stylus and writing tablet of wax.

The Byzantine women of Constantinople, when that city was under the rule of Eastern emperors, used hand bags which more nearly resembled those of to-day. They were made of colorful brocades from Persia and India, and of the exquisite embroidered silks of China. For at the luxurious and opulent court of Constantinople women's dress was more costly and extravagant than it has ever been, before or since.



Boomerangs Come Home to Roost

By Nina Wilcox Putnam

Author of "The Uprising Generation," "It Pays to Smile," etc.

I DON'T suppose that my parents more than any other parents belonging to our set are really out of date, as parents go. But while I admit Dad and Mother to be quite sophisticated for their age, they certainly are blind to my maturity and just can't be made to realize that at eighteen I am not only a woman, but a world-weary one who has no illusions left about life.

Of course, any one who has lived as long as I have ought to know that the days when every person had up to the age of thirty in which to make good are gone forever, and that now one must make one's mark in the world by the time one is twelve, or be listed as a back number. As a matter of fact the average social career starts even younger than that. At least, it certainly does out at Windhurst, Long Island, where we have our country seat.

But my parents, in spite of the evidence continually under their noses, simply don't perceive that nowadays childhood is practically nonexistent. And if only I could have opened their eyes to the younger set as it really is, I might have avoided the scene which precipitated my retirement from the world.

On the morning of our fatal misunderstanding my parents sent for me immediately after breakfast; a bad sign and a sure indication of trouble. So I did not exactly hurry down when Carlton, our butler, knocked at my door and said that if Miss Lila was dressed, Mrs. Warren would like to see me in her private sitting room, at once. And as I, obeying the summons, dawdled in her doorway, I heard Mother springing this line.

"Ernest," she was saying to Dad, "I consider it simply outrageous that any girl of Lila's age should be permitted to do a thing of that sort! She has a great deal too much liberty in every way, and I must ask you to speak to her severely!"

"It's a confounded shame, that's what it is!" growled Dad. "But it is only one of many things about which I shall have to take—er—steps!"

Then I came into the room. Dad and Mother exchanged a covert look and fell into an uneasy, if temporary, silence. I boiled with annoyance at this obvious procedure. How plainly that overheard scrap of conversation showed their attitude toward me! They regard-

ed me as a child—especially Dad; while, of course, Mother qualified her attitude with an acceptance of the fact that I was marriageable. Quaint thing, that! I'm a kid in every other way, and she knows what's best for me—but I may get married if I like. Typical inconsistency of the older generation, eh, what?

"Baby dear!" said Mother. "Come in and sit down. Your father and I feel we must have a serious talk with you."

"Isn't that rather unnecessary, Mother?" I asked, dropping into a chair. "I can tell you in advance exactly what you are going to say. Shall I? And may I smoke?"

"No, you may not!" roared the dear old pater, with unexpected vehemence. "No, you may not! You will listen to your Mother respectfully."

"I'm perfectly respectful, Dad," I replied. "What I mean is there's no need to make a solemn occasion of this, that's all. And why tell me something I already know?"

"Do you hear your child, Edith?" said Father, turning upon Mother, who withers under his rages far more satisfactorily than I do. "Do you hear her? The impudence of it! Now, miss," he added, turning to me, "I'd like to be informed, merely as a matter of curiosity, just what you suppose you were called down here for, eh?"

"Well," said I a trifle nervously, my hunch is that I am about to be instructed concerning the evils of that roulette wheel Topper Henly set up at the club last night and that I shall be dropped a few hints to the effect that no gentlewoman would have played it, much less have lost fifty dollars on the beastly thing!"

At this my parents exchanged a look of horror. It was the genuine article and I saw with dismay that I had spilled the beans.

"Lila Warren!" Mother exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me that the young

people have actually been playing roulette for money over at the club?"

"Good heavens, I thought you knew it!" I wailed. "Sorry I mentioned it!"

"Lila," said my father, no longer pompous, but thoroughly alarmed and very serious indeed. "Lila, my daughter, this is worse than vulgar: it is immoral. You young people have all been pretty wild, but until now nothing beyond behavior in bad taste has been called to my attention. Turning the country club into a gambling hell! By Heaven, it's not to be endured for one moment!"

"Oh, Baby, you silly!" said Mother. "What did you do it for? What will people say?"

"It's not only a question of what people will say of these mad youngsters, Edith," said my father. "It's a question of their whole morale!"

"But, Ernest, what can you possibly do about it?" Mother protested.

"Do?" snorted Dad. "Do? That's easy enough! I'm going to raise merry hell with the house committee. I'm not a big stockholder in that club for nothing!"

Dad was quite dramatic, really! I felt like saying "Bravo!" but thought better of it and held my tongue.

"Well, Ernest, I think that is a very sensible plan," Mother remarked. "It is high time a reform was instituted."

This was about all I could stand, so I got to my feet.

"May I be excused?" I murmured uncomfortably. "I am not very much interested in blue-law discussions."

"You may go, Lila," said Father grimly, "but you are not excused. I am going to give you one more chance to show us that you can behave yourself. We have seen you through a great many scrapes, but the end of our patience has come, and if you get into another mess you will leave me no alternative but to send you away to some place where you cannot bring us any

more objectionable notoriety. I mean a convent, or something of the sort! And mind you, Lila, I will go through with this threat!"

Well, I left the room trying to tell myself both he and Mother were just too quaint for words, and that of course I would continue to lead my own life as I saw fit. But somehow I did not carry much conviction with myself. Dad was in dead earnest. For the first time in years he had given me a heartfelt call-down and I knew I had been warned. Besides, honestly, I had been getting away with a good deal of murder lately. As for cleaning up the club, I thought well, just let 'em try it, that's all!

But the usual depression incident to any serious interview with my family did not weigh me down for long, and as soon as I escaped into the garden the sunshine and the soft salt air sweeping in from the Atlantic washed a good bit of my alarm and indignation away, and I was contentedly playing with Tatters, my English sheep dog, when Billy Burns parked his flivver on the road beyond, got out, leaned his elbows on the top of the low garden wall, and began destroying what little happiness I had succeeded in building up for myself.

Now Billy is an ace, and if only he had asked me less often I might have said "yes" long ago. But telling me that he loved me on an average of eight days a week, was only one of the wrong plays he had been making. In spite of this, however, I might have fallen for him if he hadn't been such a prune about what he was pleased to call the "damn fool behavior of the younger set," besides constantly reading me lectures about my own contributions to said set's performances. At the particular moment of his appearance on the other side of our garden wall the principal thing which held me to him was my mother's objection to him.

"Good morning, dearest. I have great
4—Ains.

news!" said Billy excitedly. "Come a little closer!"

"Not much!" said I, laughing. "I don't trust you! What's the dirt? Spill it!"

"Dad's taken me into the lumber business as a full partner!" said he. "Oh, Baby, my dear, now I can go and have a talk with your father. You know the last time I saw him he said to come back when I was worth ten thousand dollars and then he'd consider letting me propose to you over his official signature!"

Well, I can't tell you what a funny feeling this announcement gave me. Something started fluttering in my throat. I don't know whether the feeling was a pleasant or an unpleasant one, I only know that it was new and upsetting. Of course I was accustomed to having Billy propose, but somehow this definite development made getting married take on an alarmingly real aspect, and I do believe my feet really and truly and physically grew cold.

"Why, William Burns!" I said slowly. "Of course I'm glad to have you make good—but don't speak to Dad!"

"Why not, dear?" Billy exclaimed. "I thought this would settle things between us."

"I—I know I did let you imagine something of the kind!" I gasped. "But though I do like you, old dear, marrying sort of finishes things, don't you know, and I've only begun on them!"

All the light went out of Billy's face.

"Lila Warren, I don't think you give me a square deal, going hot and cold all the time," said he. "How much do you think I can stand, anyhow? I want a home of my own—and—and everything! Come now, dear, be fair! Of course you like a good time. But, goodness knows, you've had it—you, the most popular deb of the year!"

Now it was that last sentence which got my Angora immediately. Although scared, I had been distinctly weakening

up to that very moment and then, as usual, Billy had to go and spoil it all.

"And so you think I have had enough good times," I flung at him. "Well, Billy, I guess I'll stay free and—and raise the devil if I wish to! I'll talk to you about marrying some other time—perhaps!"

There was a little silence. Billy took his elbows off the fence, and stuck his hat back on his head with the air of finality which he is accustomed to pulling on such occasions.

"No, you won't take it up later," he said grimly. "This was an offer of marriage, not a business proposition, and I've about reached the end of my rope. Well, I guess I'll say good-by!"

"Oh, Billy, don't be a crab!" I called after him. But he had already climbed into his tin Lizzie and perhaps he didn't hear me amid her starting throes. At any rate, he didn't seem to, and presently, without another word, vanished down the road in a cloud of dust.

But I was not alarmed. I knew Billy too well. He was in the habit of leaving me for good about once a week, but twenty-four hours was generally good enough.

And so when I arrived at the country club dance that night with Toodles, 2nd, and Topper, and my side kick, Kitty Lasselle, I immediately looked about for Billy, but he hadn't showed up. I was a good bit disappointed at this because, after all, Billy was a wonderful dancer. And besides, down deep in a strictly private corner of my heart, I did intend to marry him some day. However, I wasn't left to my secret sorrow about his absence for very long. A gasp of astonishment from Toodles, 2nd, aroused me from my introspection—mercifully before any one discovered that I was doing anything so dull as thinking, for Heaven help the deb who shows signs of any such vicious tendency!

"I say! Will you look at that?" Tood-

les bleated. And when I saw what had hit him so hard, I echoed his astonishment, for along the wall sat half a dozen chaperons! Actually! Just as in the old days when my married sister Anita came out. And what was even more startling, taken in connection with the appearance of these, the band was playing a waltz!

"Good heavens, we can't dance this fool thing!" I said impatiently. "What under heaven has happened to the club, anyway?"

It was not Toodles who answered, but Mr. Murford, an old married man, who was standing near.

"We have been cleaning house a bit, Miss Warren," he said with a smile. "There is to be no drinking on the premises, and the modern dances are forbidden by the house committee from now on!"

"What an outrage!" I gasped.

"Why don't you shout that at your parents?" said Mr. Murford in his cynical voice. "They started all this, so I understand. Raised the very devil about what had been going on and threatened the trustees—and here you are!"

Well, that pretty well floored me, I must admit, because of course I stick by the old family ship, in public at any rate, so all I could do was give Mr. Murford an icy stare and just naturally waltz away with Toodles.

The evening proved unspeakably dull at first. Really, I don't see how any one dared offer such a dry, jazzless affair under the head of amusement! Shortly before twelve o'clock, daylight-saving time, the chaperons, under the impression that the party was about over, took their departure. Then a few of us live ones got up a collection so that we might keep the band on until twelve o'clock standard. And this time extension worked my downfall.

I don't care who says I did it first—that's not the truth, I didn't, didn't,

didn't! It was the orchestra leader's fault, anyhow, for playing "Shake 'Em Up," without being requested to. And of course nobody could resist it. In the face of the house-committee ruling, I held out until Helen Wilder and her partner started. And then Toodles, 2nd, said to come on and not be a stiff, he wanted to teach me the snake walk. A little while after Tich Winthrop dropped in with a case of rye in the back of his car, and somehow or other the party got pretty wild. No use stalling, it did. Not that I was guilty of anything but dancing. By one o'clock I had that snake walk mastered like a professional snake charmer. But my new accomplishment wasn't all I got out of the evening—by nine-thirty next morning I had something much worse.

Kitty, like the true, good friend that she is, rushed right over to tell me the dreadful news the very minute she heard it.

"Baby!" she cried, bursting into my bedroom before I was up. "Baby Warren, the most awful thing has happened! I learned it from Father. He's on the house committee of the club, you know, and, oh, Baby! They're calling a special meeting this morning on account of the shindig last night, and they're going to ask you to resign from the club. They say you started the crowd snake-walking—they say you always start that sort of thing. Oh, Lila, what shall you do?"

For a moment I couldn't answer. I could not even think. I felt blinded by a sudden, sick pain, just as if somebody had hit me over the head. It was terrible, terrible! Why had I ever been such a silly ass? What *made* me do such things? Of course I hadn't really started the confounded dance, but that wouldn't make any difference to the house committee, they'd never believe me on oath! And when this news got to Mother and Dad—well, good night!

"You must *do* something, Baby!"

Kitty insisted in a frightened whisper. "Quickly! The meeting is called for eleven o'clock, at the clubhouse. Oh, *do* think of something!"

"Heavens, Kitty, I'm finished!" I said with a groan. "I can never survive it. If *only* I could see some way to prevent this happening, I'd be good for the rest of my life. I swear it by everything that I hold sacred! I've been an idiot, Kitty, and it had to take a thing like this—a public disgrace—to bring me to my senses!"

"Can't you tell them you didn't start it?" Kitty suggested eagerly, but not very intelligently.

"And put Helen in wrong? Never!" I said fiercely. "Besides, in reality I am just as guilty as she is! No, that's no good!"

"But you can't lie there all day doing nothing!" Kitty protested hysterically. "There must be *some* way of beating those nasty, prudish older people!"

"There is!" I said after a pause, during which I did a good deal of rapid, if heavy, thinking. "There is, Kitty, but there is only one way. And that is to switch over and become one of them!"

"How—but how?" she asked.

"I mean just this: that there is a lot of horse sense in their attitude," I said severely. "We do act like the devil and they are perfectly right in objecting to it. I, for one, am fed up with our bunch and with the life I've been leading. I'm through with it, that's what, Kitty Lasselle! And when you fall seriously in love some day, and want to get married and raise a family, you will see it as they do, and as I do."

"Lila Warren, what on earth do you mean?" asked Kitty.

"Just hand me my writing pad, will you, old dear?" said I. "I want to dash off a little note which will make the whole thing clear to you."

Well, Kitty brought the pad, and after a few moments of concentration I

accomplished the following, and I must admit that I enjoyed watching her face as she read it.

MR. ALBERT LASSELLE, CHAIRMAN HOUSE COMMITTEE, WINDHURST COUNTRY CLUB.

MY DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: As I am about to become a young matron and establish a home in this community, where I shall doubtless entertain many young people as visitors, I feel it my duty to protest about the modern dancing and the drinking at the country club. Unless conditions are promptly changed for the better I must ask you to accept my resignation from the club, and I feel sure that my fiancé, Mr. Burns, will feel as I do.

Yours very truly, LILA WARREN.

"Baby!" Kitty shrieked. "For the love of Lucifer!"

"You get that handed to your father just before the meeting is called to order, or you are no friend of mine!" I said grimly. "Go to the club and hand it to him yourself and see that he reads it *aloud*! Go on, now, or you won't be in time. And come back and tell me what happens!"

"Baby, I've got to hand it to you!" said Kitty solemnly, picking up her hat. "I'll go at once. But, tell me, do you really mean to marry Billy?"

"I most certainly do!" I retorted hotly. "He's just the man for me—a real, reasonable citizen, who will help me to keep out of mischief. Besides, I'm as in love with him as—as anything! So that's that!"

"Well, I'll be dashed!" said Kitty, and went off to spread the news.

Of course I had not yet mentioned to Billy the fact that I was going to marry him, but I felt sure that I just knew how he'd take it. And when Kitty returned an hour later with a note from her father, she also brought a second envelope which jogged my memory about the above-mentioned neglected item.

"This is from Dad," said Kitty, flinging the envelope at me. "And the other one seems to be from Billy—your maid said he left it, and so I brought it up."

"Thanks!" said I. "Let's see the one

from the club first. What did they all say over there?"

"It was a riot!" said she simply. "And the town is in a ferment over you by now. I told every one I met of your engagement, of course. The house committee did not even bring you up, except to vote you a note of assurance that the club dances would be thoroughly well-behaved affairs in the future!"

"Well, I should hope so!" said I severely, reading the formal note from the club secretary with much satisfaction. Then I opened the one from Billy, smiling to myself as I thought of how happy the dear boy was going to be inside of a very few moments—just as soon as I could locate him on the telephone, in fact! But as I began to read his letter the first paragraph didn't seem to make sense. I thought I must have been mistaken, and reread it slowly, a terrible chill settling on my heart as I did so, for it said:

DEAR LILA: By the time this reaches you I shall be far away. I am not going to tell any one where I am headed for, as I feel that I must have a chance to be alone and get over my infatuation for you. Lila, I have come to the end. It is now plain that you don't intend to marry me. So I have no choice except to go away and try to forget you, and perhaps some day find another girl who won't think so badly of me as you do, and with whom I can in time be happy.

I have truly loved you, Baby dear, but you haven't been quite fair to me, and I am sure a clean break is best for both of us. Some day you will find some one for whom you will fall with an awful crash, and I sincerely hope he will not make you suffer as you have made me suffer; but yet I do hope you will some day know what love is.

I must close now. I wish you all good luck, and when I return home, healed, I shall try to be your friend. Wm. B.

For a moment or two I sat there, stunned, the letter and the hand which held it motionless, as though they had suddenly become paralyzed. From what seemed to be a great distance a voice started calling something. It was Kitty.

"Don't look like that, Baby!" she

screamed. "What is it? Has he killed himself?"

"No," I replied after a while, and it seemed as though it was a stranger talking and not me at all. "No, he has not killed himself, he has killed me! He has killed my future!"

"Great Scott!" said Kitty. "The brute! What does he say?"

I allowed her to take the letter and read it. The whole town would soon know what an utter fool I had made of myself, anyhow, so why attempt to hold anything back? I sat limply at the very bottom of a black hole while Kitty read Billy's communication.

Then she kissed me effusively on both cheeks, told me not to mind, and went off, leaving me to an hour the like of which I hope never to spend again.

What Dante felt was just about my own feeling. Anyway, I certainly went through hell, and when I came a little way out of it on the other side I realized at least one tremendous truth. I was through with men forever. I would never, never marry one. They were a pack of idiots, anyway, wholly devoid of the finer feelings, and thinking about nothing in the world but eating and tennis and dancing and baseball. Their one line of conversation was to say "Well, what do you think about Love?" and then go on to tell you about their ideal—who was a lot like you. But depth? Faithfulness? Bah! They didn't know what the words meant. I knew—ah, didn't I know?—what men were!

Out of the bitterness of my past I would find enough memories of man to last me for the next fifty years, right up to the point where I was a charming old lady like a Dresden-china figure with beautiful, snowy hair and lavender-silk dresses and huge pearls, a still girlish complexion, and a mysterious past—a gracious and fascinating old lady of whom people would whisper, "Her heart was killed when she was only eighteen—that is why she is so good to the poor

girls at St. Agnes' Home!" You know, something of that sort!

The more I thought about it, the surer I grew. What could men do that we women couldn't anyhow? We could vote, drive our own cars, aviate—why burden ourselves with the unnecessary animals? Right then and there I determined to do without them in every capacity so long as there was a breath of life in me. I would have a woman doctor, a female lawyer, a lady dentist, a she real-estate agent when necessary and deal only at shops run by women. I'd never go to a man for help on any account, no, not if I died for it!

As for William Burns, I had loved him and announced my engagement to him, and you know what place has no fury like a woman scorned! My heart was completely and thoroughly broken, and I would never care for any one or anything again, I realized that. But I'd live out what remained of my life somehow, somewhere.

Somewhere was the leading question. For, of course, nothing on earth would induce me to stay on in Windhurst after what had happened. To begin with, I could not live in my Father's house if I was to carry out my program of having nothing to do with anybody who wasn't a woman. Because of course Father would be there, and Carlton, the butler, and the chauffeurs and gardeners.

And then there was the disturbing memory of what Father had distinctly stated he would do if I got into one more scrape. He would send me away to a convent. That would be female enough, but the plan had its drawbacks. For while there was a certain romantic melancholy attached to becoming a sweet-faced, gentle nun, I had a feeling that I wouldn't last in the part. No, I must go away and go quickly, before the news reached my family and they got a chance to pick out the place for me. It was at this desperate crisis that I thought of Aunt Buena.

Now Aunt Buena, although about sixty years old, was still husky enough to keep herself to herself on her little farm outside the village of Dixwell, Maine. I had never met her, and only knew her through Mother's occasionally making one of those half-hearted confessions about her which Mother sometimes likes to get off her chest and call it a day's duty done.

"I really ought to do something about Aunt Buena, Ernest," she would remark to my dad, and Dad would say, "Oh, leave her alone! She's all right!"

And Mother would bow to Dad's superior masculine judgment and the subject would be closed until the next time.

Aunt Buena Carstairs was really Mother's aunt and my great-aunt. She had staged a violent love affair of some kind when she was young but eventually broke with the man, and, whatever the reason for their quarrel, became a regular professional man hater because of it, living by herself on that lonely little farm a million miles from nowhere and spurning all masculine society.

So when my own tragedy occurred I not unnaturally thought of Aunt Buena's as a haven of refuge. I felt that she would understand me perfectly, help me, and protect me from my cruel parents. Anyway, they were pretty nearly certain to be cruel when they heard the news.

Aunt Buena had a little fortune of her own, and so had I, inherited, I was happy to remember, from my maternal grandmother, and we could live very comfortably on the combined income. We could pool our interests and our hatred of men, and become a sort of living example of how for several generations the women of our stock could get along without the male sex altogether. It would at least be a simple and wholesome life and could be led, very mercifully, far from the country-club crowd.

However sure I felt of Aunt Buena and her sympathetic welcome, I didn't run the risk of wiring her. I felt I was

not in a position to take any chances. Mother had gone to town and would not come out until afternoon, and Father, of course, was at business. I decided simply to go at once.

Inside of an hour I was all ready. I had what few clothes I was likely to need in a manless world packed into one suit case, donned my riding clothes, left a note telling her I was gone forever, but not to worry about me, pinned to Mother's dressing table, climbed into my little red roadster, and, with Tatters as my only companion, sneaked out of Windhurst by the back roads and set my face toward Maine and the future.

The first day out all went well. I slept that night just beyond Westerly at a boarding house kept by a woman, and the next morning started off again early, with an increased sense of calm and resolution. It was a simply gorgeous day, crisp and clear and full of sunshine, and if only my heart hadn't been so lame and sore, the world would have appeared as a delightful place, although it did seem rather terrible that Nature could smile so brightly when I was so broken-hearted, and had become a changed, mature woman. I thought of this sadly whenever it occurred to me. But driving the little old bus was a great heart-easer, and the sure, sweet sound of her engine gave me considerable comfort.

All day long she traveled like a song bird, and by the second noon away from home my oppression had begun to lift quite a bit. If I was soul sick, I was also freer than I had ever before been in my entire life. Nobody knew who I was, where I was, what I was. I hardly knew myself, but I sure did like the feeling, and Tatters was all the company I needed. Thank Heaven, Tatters was a female!

Then, just before sunset, I was climbing a big grade on a thickly wooded stretch of road with not a house in sight when my engine began to knock horri-

bly. My heart knocked with it, I don't mind admitting. It groaned and wheezed as well. I mean the engine did.

Halfway up the hill it died altogether. I jammed on the brakes and got out to look at the darned thing, and try to find out what the matter was. I had gas, oil, water: that I could ascertain for myself, but no more. But I took up the hood and looked inside in the hope which springs eternal in the motorist's breast that hypnotism would cure engine trouble. But it didn't. The darned thing's innards looked all right to me, but then they would have looked that way anyhow and, besides I already knew they were not. That was all I did know, however, and I had sworn not to ask for masculine help.

The question now arose—*was* there such a thing as a female garage? And if so, could it possibly be located in Dixwell? Dixwell was about five miles away over rough and hilly roads upon which night was rapidly creeping, and the prospect of walking there was hardly cheerful. It was one very poor situation to be in, and just as I was digesting it thoroughly, I heard a sound in the underbrush which made my heart fly into my mouth. Something was moving about in there, was coming toward me; and presently I saw it to be a man.

It took pretty nearly all my courage to look at him as he emerged from the woody growth and approached the car, and after I got one look it took all the rest of my courage not to scream, for the man, khaki-clad and carrying a string of fish, was Billy Burns!

For a moment he stood silent, as astonished as I was, and then he spoke.

"Baby!" he said with an indescribable note in his voice! "Oh, Baby, you! And in trouble!"

I could not utter a word. I literally could not, even if it hadn't been against my vow ever to speak to him again.

"What is it?" he asked. "And how

on earth do you happen to be here of all places?"

I had found my voice by now, but I refused to use it.

"Won't you tell me what it's all about, dea—that is, I mean to say—what it's all about?" he stammered on, rather upset by my continued silence. I was simply wild. I wanted to tear him apart. But, of course, all I could do was to stamp my foot and turn my back on him. Billy gave a long whistle.

"Mad!" he said. "Mad clean through and won't ask my help if she dies for lack of it! I get you! Well, our—er—changed relationship doesn't mean that I've gone back on you, Baby, old-timer! There's nothing wrong with your bus except a loose connection that I can see from here. I'll have it right in a jiffy!"

He put down his burdens and got to work. I could see him out of the corner of one eye, although of course I pretended utter, blind indifference. And in five minutes he had the thing fixed.

"Don't think me a cad, Lila," he said when he had finished, coming over beside me and speaking quietly. "I only did what I honestly thought was best. I don't blame you for not wanting to speak to me—the girl should be the person to do a thing of that kind, as I fully realize. But you never would. And you had kept me dangling as long as I could endure it. Try not to hate me, Baby. I am very far from hating you!"

Still I would not speak.

"Don't be afraid that I shall try to force myself upon you in any way," he continued. "When you leave me now, you need not give me another thought, I assure you."

Well, that was about as much as I could stand. So I ignored him—what else could I do? Silently brushing him aside, I stepped into my car and drove off, wild with fury at his having rescued me, and feeling, rather than seeing, his figure standing there on the deserted

road, watching motionless as I sped away.

Half blinded by tears of rage, I might have driven right through Dixwell Center without knowing it, if it hadn't been for my almost running into the town traffic cop and being held up by him.

"Hey, where d'you think you're going, miss?" he said crossly, as I ground on the brakes.

"To Dixwell!" I said, forced by circumstances to smile at a male, although I did not feel a bit like doing so. It worked, however.

"Well, I reckon you've got as far as you're going, ther!" said he.

"Oh, have I?" I exclaimed. "Thank you for telling me. And could you direct me to Miss Buena Carstairs' farm?"

"Well, say, you're never going *there*!" said the officer, aghast.

"Certainly I am!" I retorted sharply. "Why not?"

"Well," said the constable, "there's not many get a very warm welcome up to Miss Carstairs'. Sure that's where you want to go?"

"Of course I'm sure," said I. "I'm Miss Carstairs' niece, and I am going to visit her."

"Well, of course you know best!" said the officer, still dubiously. "Take the first road to your left down by that red barn, and keep straight ahead," he added. "It's a little gray-shingled house; sets way back in!"

Well, I'll publish that I set off on that side road in rather an uneasy frame of mind. To begin with, it was getting dark. And then the officer had spoken about my old relative in a mighty peculiar fashion. He had certainly suggested a mystery, and possibly an unpleasant one, at that, so when presently an owl hooted near by in the woods I nearly threw a royal fit and almost wished myself back home. But Aunt Buena's place, when at last I found it, about three miles outside of the Center, was

reassuring looking, and I got my grip back the moment I set eyes upon its demure front.

For Aunt Buena turned out to be a pretty good scout. She was a lively old cricket, very thin and small and alert. And although she was, of course, most awfully surprised at seeing me, she heard my story out with an approval which grew obviously as my tale of woe progressed to its climax.

"Good for you, child! Good for you!" she said when I had finished. "You came to the right person. Men are all impossible. I even had to discharge my hired man this afternoon. But you can easily do his work. I keep no servant, and I have about all I can attend to indoors, myself!"

Well, this was a little more than I had bargained for. How on earth could I have imagined that any member of our family would live without maids, and all that? But Aunt Buena did, and apparently took for granted that I would show no surprise. So of course I kept my face and agreed to do whatever she asked. Evidently finding me to her taste, she at once accepted me, handed out instructions about putting my bus away, and then gave both Tatters and me some supper.

"We'll show those loafers of men in the village!" said she, as she watched me eat. "We'll show them what women can do alone! Do you know, my dear, Cyrus is the third hired man I've chased off this place?"

As I was selected to do Cyrus' work, this didn't seem a very gay opening for me.

"What for?" I asked, alarmed.

"For doddering!" said she. "All hired men dodder, and I can't endure it!"

"Of course not, Auntie!" I replied hastily, although I hadn't the remotest notion of what she meant. However, it didn't seem a pleasant thing to do, doddering didn't.

"Was yours very bad?" she asked

abruptly, after a short silence. And this time I understood her meaning at once. I stopped eating directly.

"Yes," I said in a low, broken voice.

"Oh, men!" said my aunt inclusively, inditing them all at a single blow. "Mine loved horses better than he did me. Always with his horses. He still is. Horses, on top of his name, were too much for me!"

"What was his name, Aunt?" I asked.

"Ostler," said she briefly.

I didn't quite know the comeback to that, so I suggested maybe I had better go out now and do whatever evening chores were necessary.

"All right," said my aunt briskly. "I am glad to see that you have those riding trousers. Correct things for the work. I guess we have wood enough cut for the morning, but you can go out and milk the cow while I clean up the dishes."

She picked up two shiny new pails, handed them to me, and led me out through the spotless kitchen to the back porch. The moon had come up and the world was very bright, giving the silent little house, in its patch of clearing around which the dark woods crowded on all sides, an eerie appearance that was rather scary. But when Aunt Buena pointed out the shed where the cow was I pretended to go bravely across to it, although I had to go alone. I entered the shadowy place with a distinctly creepy feeling. However, I had now publicly said that I could do without men, and I intended proving my statement even if that meant tackling a strange animal every night of my life.

Now this cow, Johanna by name, was parked in a stall right under a good-sized window through which the moon was shining brightly. After half an hour's struggle with Johanna something happened which frightened me out of a week's growth, and caused me to spill the pint or so of milk in the bottom of one shiny pail. Suddenly, without a

sound, a shadow crossed the moonlit patch on the opposite wall—the shadow of a man!

It was gone almost instantly, leaving me frozen to the spot. Seeing the shadow was bad enough, but most certainly any properly behaved shadow should have been accompanied by the sound of footsteps, and this one was not. Very cautiously I got up and peered out of the door. Not a soul was in sight. The barnyard lay clear and empty under the bright moon. Thinking that perhaps it had all been in my own fool head, I dashed across to the house, determined to say nothing about it for fear of alarming my aunt unnecessarily, but when I found her she didn't exactly cheer.

"Dear, dear! A perfect crime!" said Auntie, giving the empty milk pails a rancid look. "To-morrow you'll have to go for help."

"I say! Can't we phone for some one now?" I asked, mortified. But auntie shook her head.

"I don't keep a telephone!" she said disapprovingly. "First thing in the morning you will have to run over and fetch Mr. Ostler, I'm afraid!"

After which, darned if she didn't read me a chapter out of the Bible! And then we went to bed.

On my way over to the Ostler place, early the following day, I cursed my aunt's weakness and my own. It was not so good, this going for male help, and yet, if I had not shown up last night Auntie would have had to ask him herself, which was, in a way, even worse than my doing so.

Mr. Ostler had quite a farm. There was a small race track upon it and a sort of baby grand stand and as for the barns, they were immense. The place looked fairly prosperous, but there was nobody around the neat little homestead itself, so I went questing over toward the stables, still inwardly boiling with fury at being obliged to ask for a man's help.

At first I couldn't find a soul anywhere about, although I ventured a mild "Hello," or two, and I was about to give it up and go home when I heard that peculiar sound which grooms make when they are currying a horse—you know, a sort of "pu-r-r-r-uph!" repeated continuously. At home in Windhurst I had often heard our Tom make it when he was currying the riding horses, and this noise was just the same. It came from the big stable nearest me and presently it was interrupted by a soothing, "Now then, steady, gal! Steady, gal! Whoa, girlie!" Then the "pu-r-r-r-uph!" was continued. Naturally I went right away and looked in and, believe me, I got an eyeful.

In the midst of a spacious box stall stood an old Ford touring car, carefully bedded down with clean straw, and beside it was a little old man, as bent and dried up as an ancient evergreen tree, but lively as a young grasshopper. And this old fellow was *currying the Ford!* Upon my solemn word! He was washing it with a regular hostler's brush covered with a soft cloth, purring to it, patting it, and, even as I watched, using a currycomb to get the mud off its wheels! When I coughed to attract his attention he looked up as quickly as a bird, and pierced me with the bluest eyes I have ever seen.

"Well, young lady!" said he. "What can I do for you?"

"Good morning!" said I. "I am from Miss Carstairs'. I—er—we—that is to say, we had a little trouble over there last night."

"Good heavens, how many times have I told that woman she needed a man in the family!" the old man exclaimed. "Did he do much damage—take anything?" he added anxiously.

"Did who take what?" I asked stupidly.

"Why, the burglar, of course!" he replied.

"Burglar?" I repeated. "It's not about

a burglar taking anything that I came over—it's about Johanna, our cow."

"Praise be!" said the old boy. "What ails Buena's hired man that he can't tend to Johanna?"

"He's gone," I said briefly. "I say, Mr. Ostler—you are Mr. Ostler, I presume?" He nodded. "Well," I went on, "what made you think there had been a robbery at our house?"

My mind had at once flown back to the mysterious shadow I had seen last night, and if there was a worst to know I wanted to know it. There was.

"Say, don't you know about old Miss Dennis over to Greenville?" Mr. Ostler exclaimed excitedly. "No? Well, Miss Dennis she took in this lame feller that came along, and she certainly was good to him. He did the chores and all for about three months, and then two nights ago he up and bound and gagged her in her bed and got away with her watch and chain and brooch and bracelets and twenty dollars in money. They ain't caught him yet, either! I don't like for Buena and you to be over there to the house alone, honest I don't!"

"Why—what nonsense!" I quavered. "There are two of us. We are all right—except for Johanna. Would you mind coming over and showing me how to milk her?"

"Certainly not, certainly not!" said Mr. Ostler. "I'm just about finished with Fanny here, and her spokes can wait until I get back!"

"You speak of that car just as if it were a horse," I remarked. "If you love horses so, why do you drive a flivver?"

Mr. Ostler turned his blue eyes, now wistful and melancholy, upon me with a sad gaze.

"I reckon you haven't been over at Buena's since yesterday and not heard yet about her and me?" he said.

"As a matter of fact, I have heard," I admitted. "But I understood the quar-

rel had been because you wouldn't give up horses?"

"Gave 'em up two weeks ago!" he said with a sigh. "But she don't seem to take any notice of it. I certainly do miss 'em, though! Kind of used to horses after sixty-two years. Not but that the flivver looks real pretty since I rubbed her up a little and had her reshod—they are new shoes. Still, she ain't a mare!"

"Why don't you drive the car over and show my aunt?" I suggested. "I don't believe she knows what you have done."

"Think that's it?" he asked wistfully. "Well, I'll tell you what. To-day is Thursday. I won't say nothing now, but Sunday morning I'll turn up with Fanny time enough to drive the two of you to church. How's that?"

"That's fine!" said I.

And it was not until an hour later, when I was out in our garden struggling with some strange bugs which were attacking auntie's potatoes, that I realized I had actually been encouraging a *man*. What was worse, I had even plotted to help him in a love affair. I, the sworn enemy of mankind!

I was horror-stricken even though, from the sound of their voices as they quarreled loudly on the back porch, I could justly console myself with the thought that I had not really done very much damage—I mean good—that is to say, you get the idea! They had not as yet grown exactly loverlike because of my interference.

Well, this second day on the farm was not much of a success from any point of view, excepting that we got our milk. For gardening turned out to be beastly hard, hot work, and, as Aunt Buena pointed out, the bugs had an inconsiderate way of refusing to wait for cooler weather. So, after a little urging, I drove into the village, bought some poison, brought it home, and, after having sat and looked at it hard for nearly

an hour because, truth to tell, I was ghastly afraid of the stuff, I left it upon the back porch and went upstairs to my room to cry. Not for any particular reason: just to cry.

And now the mystery which hung about the house began to thicken, for when I came downstairs again a while later the poison was gone. Clean vanished!

I asked Aunt Buena about it, but she had not seen it at all, and insisted that I must have left it down at the store. She was so sure of this that she almost convinced me I had done so. Almost, but not quite. It was an upsetting incident, to say the least, because two-pound cans of poison don't walk away by themselves, and I could not help wondering how the last hired man whom Aunt Buena had driven off the place was feeling about it.

The shadows of night were upon us almost before I knew it, finding me with a big day's work to my credit except in the matter of the woodpile behind the barn. This woodpile was massive enough, to be sure, but not as yet cut into stove lengths. However, after a lot of struggling and some language which it is just as well nobody was there to hear, I managed to split enough to make a fire for auntie to cook supper over. And then, with blistered hands and aching shoulders, I took the milk pail and started for the barn, a dull resentment glowing in my heart at my cruel parents for not at least trying to find me and bring me home to a fatted calf.

I must admit that I hate veal, and of course I had started off with every intention of not allowing my parents to find me. Still, I began to feel that it was the proper thing for them to have done, even against my will, and decided that when I had children of my own I certainly would look after them better than my parents had looked after me, and would not allow them to be outcast and misunderstood. And then, in the

midst of this thought, it came to me suddenly that I would never have any children. That was one of the penalties I would have to pay for my freedom from men. It didn't seem fair a bit, somehow, and I rattled my pails savagely as I charged in upon our cow.

I had just finished milking, pretty successfully this time, and was resting after my labors, when again that sinister shadow crossed the wall before me.

To-night there could be no mistake. It was the shadow of a man—silent, stealthy, terrible. It wavered past more slowly this time, its outlines vague and enormous upon the whitewashed side of the wall.

How long I sat there without daring to move, I can't tell. Outside, distantly, a dog howled and howled, and nearer at hand a small owl began an uncanny, half-whispered hooting, tremulous and mysterious. And then, worst of all, there was a sound up above me, a soft rustling, as if some one was moving cautiously about in our hayloft, where the hired man had slept.

I wanted to scream, but I couldn't. I wanted to run, but I did not dare, for I could not have faced Aunt Buena without my two pails of milk, and so, forcing down my terror, I arose slowly and carried them into the house.

"Lila Warren!" said Aunt Buena in the kitchen, by way of a cheerful greeting. "I'm not sure, but I *think* I saw a strange man cross our yard and disappear around the barn!"

"I thought so, too!" I managed to gasp. "What shall we do? Go look?"

"Certainly not!" snapped my aunt. "We will simply ignore him by sleeping with every door and window shut!"

Well, we shut the doors and windows, all right, but as for sleeping, that was quite another matter! I know I lay awake in utter misery, feeling horribly unprotected and hearing all kinds of weird sounds, real or imagined. It sure was a relief to get up alive at sunrise,

and steal out into the cool, well-washed air. When I did so a surprise awaited me, for beside the kitchen door was a great pile of stove length wood, neatly cut, and beside it lay my two-pound poison can—empty!

After seizing and examining it to make certain it was really the same can, I ran out to the garden. And there, sure enough, the potatoes had all been nicely poisoned. But who on earth had done it? Was it Mr. Ostler, in his unobtrusive devotion to Auntie? Or was it the mysterious tramp, who I now felt sure was sleeping in our barn? After dopping it out pretty thoroughly, I decided that it was the latter who paid us these little attentions with the idea of making friends with us in order that he might rob and perhaps murder us.

Yet in spite of this bright idea, I somehow managed to live through another day of hard work. Auntie was apparently not aware that any one but myself had cut that wood, and I was afraid to draw her attention to the fact. But when sunset approached my dread of the barn and of my evening's task mounted to terrific proportions. I was too proud to go squealing to Aunt Buena about it, but I was justified in being afraid. All day I just *felt* something horrid was going to happen, and I was right. For, true to schedule, the shadow crossed the window as before and this night, with an added chill of horror, I guessed at the cause of its slowness. *The man who cast the shadow was probably lame!*

It was then that I began to weaken on the man question, and to wish like the devil that Dad or—or—well, some reliable male was around. And although absolutely nothing disturbing happened to us throughout that second wakeful night, even little Mr. Ostler was a welcome sight when next morning, shortly before church time, he came rattling up in the flivver and dismounted, as you might say, before our door.

Auntie and I were both dressed for church—I, it must be confessed, for the first time in many months. Auntie had intended allowing me to drive her down in my roadster, but when Mr. Ostler appeared he changed our arrangements entirely and created quite a sensation.

"Herman!" said my aunt severely. "What on earth does this mean?"

"It means I've give 'em up, Buena!" said the little man humbly. "And I come around in this new contraption to see if I could drive you and your niece down to service."

For a moment Aunt Buena gaped at him, speechless except for the eloquent little ostrich feather on the front of her bonnet.

"To church—you—in an auto!" she said at length. "Well, Herman, I suppose that is a request we cannot well refuse!"

Whereupon she allowed the old sparrow to help her in. He climbed up beside her, I hopped into the tonneau, and we were off.

Never shall I forget that ride over the rough, back-country road. I'm quite some speed queen myself, but I had nothing on Herman! He drove that tin Elizabeth as if it were a mean hoss, clucking at it, soothing it with "Easy now, girlie!"—clutching the wheel with a convulsive grasp, careening around corners and over bumps, and, when she slowed up on a stiff grade, stepping on the gas, and shouting "Gittiap, gal! What's the matter with you?" He certainly did shake a wicked car!

Aunt Buena sat beside him as silently and as stiffly as circumstances permitted while we clattered up hill and down dale and into the main street. When we reached the old white church on the village green Mr. Ostler drew up before one of the long row of hitching posts there with a "Whoa, gal!" And, getting down, he produced a huge halter and proceeded to hitch the Ford se-

curely to the post before helping my aunt to descend.

"I see, Herman, that you have not wholly reformed!" she remarked icily, as she got out.

"There now, Buena! Don't you go into the House of God with wrath in your heart!" the little man admonished her. "It's kinda force of habit with me, that's all!"

The interior of that simple little church, with its white walls and red-cushioned pews and its long, open windows, which let sweeping, reverend spruce draperies into the very building itself, worked a sort of miracle in me. For as I stood up to sing the old, familiar hymns, a hard lump in my heart melted away. I seemed to lose track of hating, toq: even of hating men! I felt, suddenly that I loved everybody a lot. Everybody, but especially some one named Billy—and when I thought of him, I wanted to cry.

When church was over Aunt Buena and Mr. Ostler, after a private consultation, dropped me at the farm, and drove away on what they informed me was important business, after suggesting that I dish out the dinner, which was ready in the oven and for which they would presently return. Then they drove off down the road, leaving me to shift for myself. There was really nothing to do about the meal, and so I found a huge old illustrated volume of "Pilgrim's Progress," and, being still in a chastened frame of mind, sat down by the window to read.

Scarcely had I done so, however, when something moving near the barn attracted my attention, and, looking up, I saw the figure I had been expecting and dreading for forty-eight hours. Approaching the house was a shabbily dressed man past middle age. He came from the door of our barn, and—heavens, he was lame!

I was so terrified I scarcely knew what I was doing, but somehow I managed to

get to the back door just as he reached it. I think he was a good deal surprised when I opened the door suddenly without a sound, but he only snorted, and, brushing me aside, came into the kitchen.

"Missus not home yet?" he asked gruffly, putting his pack in one corner, and seating himself, unasked, at the center table.

"What's that to you?" I retorted, very brave on the outside, but all shot to pieces within.

"So you're all alone, hey?" said the man. "Well, give me a little something to drink, will you?"

I didn't dare refuse, so I put milk before him and he began gulping it down, talking at the same time.

"Has she had you long?" he went on, apparently meaning my aunt. "Pays you pretty well, eh?"

Then it flashed across my mind that he took me for the hired girl! *Me!* I nearly died! It seemed the last straw. At first I was going to correct him, and then it occurred to me that perhaps it was a fortunate mistake; so I nodded.

"Yes, I get money enough," I replied incautiously, for at my words a wicked look came into the man's eyes and he fumbled inside his coat, bringing out a little box.

"Then perhaps you and I can do a little business before she gets back!" said he. "I've got some nice trinkets here I'd like to sell."

With that he opened the box, spilling upon the table an old-fashioned gold watch and chain, a pair of cameo earrings, a brooch and a pair of antique bracelets; in other words, articles of jewelry exactly similar to those of which poor old Miss Dennis had been robbed. If there had ever been any real doubt in my mind about this bird's identity, those jewels would have cleared it away at once. I had a dangerous criminal on my hands, and he was trying to sell me

the fruits of his crime. But what on earth should I do about it?

Oh, how I longed for Billy! Somehow, he was the person I thought of instinctively. But of course he was not there, and it seemed that now or never I must make good my boast that I needed no masculine help. I didn't really have any choice in the matter because with no telephone and the nearest neighbor, Mr. Ostler, not at home, getting help was out of the question! Whatever was to be done must be done by me alone, and I knew I would feel disgraced forever if the burglar escaped me. But presently it seemed really more to the point that I should escape him, for he started glowering and mouthing at me most alarmingly. Cunning was the only weapon that I had against him, and I used it.

"My, but those are pretty!" I said, fingering the jewelry with a shiver. "I'd like to look at them in a stronger light. Would you mind taking them into the next room where I can see them better?"

"Anything to oblige," said the man, gathering up his trophies not too willingly.

"Right in here, then, please," I said, opening the pantry door. The stranger started to enter, saw it was a pantry with only one very small window in it, and hesitated on the doorsill. That second was enough for me. I gave him a good shove from behind which sent him sprawling in upon the floor, and then slammed and bolted the door upon him.

For the next moment or two I guess I was more frightened and surprised than my prisoner, and I stood leaning weakly against the door while he, inside, gathered himself up and began making the most awful noise you ever heard, shouting and bellowing and pounding, not to mention throwing Aunt Buena's china around in the most careless manner.

Hardly had this row got well started

than an almost equal clamor began out in the back yard, and across the porch came Billy Burns himself, calling out for me at the top of his voice as he ran.

"Lila! Lila—dearest! What's wrong?"

I didn't stop to wonder how he got there, but simply threw all pride away and flung myself into his arms the very minute he was inside the door.

"Poor little girl!" he said, holding me fast. "Don't be frightened, I'm here!"

And I took him at his word. I just clung to him and cried, determined in my heart never to let him go again as long as I lived. And it was this way that Aunt Buena and Mr. Ostler found us about one minute later.

"Lila Warren, what does this mean?" demanded my aunt, flouncing into the room. "You with a man—you deceitful child!"

"It means the poor kid has been frightened half to death by something!" said Billy.

"But not by you, evidently," snapped my aunt, "whoever you are and wherever you come from!"

"I came most recently from your hay-loft," Billy replied. "I've been sleeping up there for the past three nights and doing a few of the chores, so as to be near in case I was needed. There is a dangerous criminal at large in the neighborhood!"

"No, there isn't!" I gasped. "Not any longer. He's locked up in our pantry."

Then the razz started up in there again, drowning out the storm of exclamations which greeted my statement, and Mr. Ostler, darting to the door,

opened it before I could prevent. The noise ceased at once, and out stalked the criminal.

"Looky here, Herm!" he said indignantly, shaking a bony forefinger in Mr. Ostler's face. "This is a fine way to treat your brother when you ask him to dinner! I demand you fire that hired girl this very minute!"

"Who the—what—" began Billy.

"Good land! It's my brother Isaac!" Mr. Ostler shouted. "The traveling jeweler, you know! I telephoned from the village for him to come over to dinner to-day! Extra special occasion, to-day is!"

There was a moment of distinctly awkward silence, then, during which we just stood and gaped at each other until Billy came to the rescue with a laugh.

"Well, I'd like to stay to dinner myself, if Mr. Isaac has left enough dishes," said he. "Won't you introduce me to your folks, Baby? I am going to marry her," he added, by way of placing himself.

Aunt Buena looked at me in the queerest way, blushing right up to the roots of her jet bonnet as she spoke.

"I am Mrs. Ostler, Lila's aunt," she said tremulously, holding out her hand to Billy. Then before I could so much as whistle she turned to me. "You see what you've let me in for!" she scolded shrilly. "Here I went and gave in to him after church this morning just so's to make a decent home for you, and now you're going to leave me, you ungrateful girl!"

"Oh, Aunt Buena!" I cried reproachfully. "If you'd only held out for another hour, we might have had a double wedding!"





The Left Hand of Luck

By Winston Bouvé

Author of "The House of Herriek," "Pan's Wife," etc.

IT had never been real. At first this unreality had been like the impossible glamour of a shifting dream; too strange and exotic for the commonplace of everyday; too like a stage set of an Oriental city to make Lucinda feel that her feet were straying down cobbled streets, where chanting coolies had been bearing their burdens for a thousand years. Palace gardens, bazaars, where silks and jades worthy of the Son of Heaven gleam in fantastic splendor against musty counters and dirt floors, squatty warehouses and queer, overhanging dwellings, where are herded all races in the democracy of the scum, are all huddled together in this Paris of the East that calls itself Shanghai.

The very street smells, in which pungent joss breath mingles with the marshy river wind, she found intriguing for a time. And the scent of old silk and sandalwood, in some murky shop where she haggled over a piece of brocade was, to her romantic fancy, the odor of dead beauty one has caught once in a strange dream.

Now, she no longer felt herself to be part of such a dream. She was enthralled still, netted in unreality. But the beauty and glamour were gone. This was nightmare. A nightmare of tortuous streets and queer houses, to be hurried past; of yellow faces, almond-eyed and bland; of high-pitched speech as meaningless as jungle chatter. There were all the elements of nightmare. Its headlong sequence of garish incident, its uneasy tumult, its sense of danger portending, unescap-

able. And she couldn't wake up, find herself back in safe old San Francisco; in the white stucco house on Broadway Hill that she'd escaped from.

Her nerves were in bad shape, of course. And now they were beginning to play her tricks. That morning, for instance, she had fancied herself followed down the Street of Bending Plum Trees—the stately name had nothing whatever to do with its aspect, as it was nothing more than a discreditable alley that housed a certain jade shop. She had gone on foot, because her funds were so low now that she had begun to watch every penny, and she had taken back a costly bit of jade that, on an impulse, she had bought there two days before.

Chang Fui, the bland individual who presided behind the counters, spread out his pudgy yellow hands deprecatively, and regretted, in excellent English, the impossibility of taking back the little object Mrs. Morley tendered. He had sold it for some one else, it seemed, and had already turned the sum over. His calm eyelids had curtained whatever lay in his eyes as he explained.

"Ver' beautiful, madame," he had murmured. It was. For it wasn't a pendant, or an earring, or a commonplace lump of the precious stuff, such as one generally finds in small tourist's shops, but a miniature, a perfect facsimile of a woman's hand. Pale green in color, when held up to the light it showed a tracery of fine dark veins, curiously suggestive of human flesh and blood. "Ver' beautiful, and valuable—but not lucky."

He had smiled at her, but with a world of meaning under his slanting eyelids.

"No?" Lucinda had laughed, in spite of her irritation. It seemed silly, and yet, alone in this small, dark shop, where sunlight only patterned the sill, she felt an unreasonable, half-hysterical desire to flee. Fear is infectious, and it was fear that glittered in Chang Fui's narrow gaze. His hand closed upon the carved jade that lay between them, and deftly he dropped it back into her open bag, as if he wanted it out of vision.

"Remember it is the hand—the *left* hand—of Hwang-tai, the illustrious goddess of fortune. And her left hand deals evil, to balance the good fortune she squanders with her right."

They were quite alone, and while the Chinaman unrolled a bolt of rustling silk that was stiff with gold thread, he bent low.

"It would be better, perhaps, to destroy it," he said under his breath. "Servants are superstitious; walls have eyes and ears." Lucinda had only looked at him. "Rats know the way of rats."

What did the Mongol mean? He seemed to expect that she would understand. And before she could explain that she didn't, a shadow fell across the floor. It was only a big Englishman, in quest of feminine gewgaws, but she saw there was nothing more to be gotten out of the shopkeeper, and turned to go. Then:

"Such silks as madame describes will be brought to her this afternoon," promised Chang Fui, and bland, inscrutable, warning, he bowed her out of his shop. The absurdity of the whole incident! And it was more than absurd. Just what it was, she didn't know.

In the gutter outside the shop sat a filthy beggar, with pockmarked face and disease-ravished limbs. She had grown accustomed to such mendicants;

5—Ains.

she thrust some clinking coppers into his outstretched hand, passed down the Street of Bending Plum Trees. It was then that her taut nerves told her that some one was dogging her steps. She wheeled once or twice, glanced down the busy, twisting lane with its crowded shops and houses and bazaars, its beggars and buyers, saw only the expected, and hurried on.

The Street of Bending Plum Trees is in a quarter of Shanghai that white women do not often frequent, for excellent reasons, and Mrs. Morley, with a shadow behind her, and a pulse throbbing oddly in her round throat, sped on the wings of flight. One more street, past the Temple of Bells, and she would be safe. Europe lay around the corner, along the International Bund. Clubs and banks and big hotels, smart shops, smart people—tourists—made up this part of the amazing city. Such a little way, and her knees felt leaden, as knees do in nightmares, where escape lies just beyond one's strength. She was almost running now. She could see the stone façade of the Hongkong Bank; street cars; taxis mingling with the inevitable rickshas. A toy policeman blocked her flight across the Bund as traffic started the other way, but it didn't matter. She was safe! Safe, but trembling, and as white as the drooping Milan hat that shadowed her wide eyes.

She stood confused in the midst of the broad boulevard, looking about for a taxi or ricksha; saw a battered machine of American make beside her.

"Hotel Continental," she told the Chinaman at the wheel, and opened the door, hardly hearing his expostulation.

An astonished young man in the gloom of the taxi's interior, half rose, bumping his head, as she started to retreat.

"Please—my man will be glad to take you wherever you want to go," he assured her.

"You're an American!" she cried. And then, because her knees seemed apt to give way completely, she dropped to the seat beside him.

He was young, inclined to the adventurous and the romantic, so first of all he noticed that she was young, and quite handsome to boot. Then he saw that something was very wrong, for young women—American young women—who have poise enough to travel about on their own, don't suddenly lose it and become a quivering bundle of nerves. This girl, for instance, played tennis and rode and swam and danced any nerves she'd ever had into rippling muscle, he would have wagered. Besides, he had seen her racing down a side street toward the Bund, as if fear itself winged her feet.

"What is it?" he asked, his eyes upon her charmingly cut mouth. It was so dry that it was a temptation to run her tongue between her lips. "What did you run into—and away from?"

"A hand," said Lucinda, "a little green hand, all veined, like flesh and blood—" She pulled herself together, and surveyed the reassuring young man with candid interest.

"A little green hand!" She did not notice his startled inflection.

If one is born to an interest in the opposite sex it can be relied upon under most circumstances; Lucinda found herself thinking not of the extremely precarious situation she was involved in, nor of Chang Fui and his hand of misfortune, and the horror that had settled down upon her not long since, as she sped down the Street of Bending Plum Trees, but of this casual companion of hers. He had a delightful smile, and his thatch of dark hair grew up in becoming rebellion from his square forehead, which was very fair above the sunburn of his cheeks.

"You've been very nice, and I've been very silly." Unconsciously, her hysteria abating, she turned formal. "And I've

no earthly right to be taking you out of your way. Won't you drop me, and go on to your destination?"

He shook his head.

"That's not fair. I'm enormously interested in—the little green hand. How did you get hold of it?"

It seemed the most natural thing in the world to be telling him anything he wanted to know, Lucinda thought. She leaned back, playing with the tassel of her bag. She hadn't chatted with one of her countrymen for a long time. She could close her eyes, and pretend she was back in America, swapping tales on a country-club veranda with a personable young man. The pretense engulfed her in an agony of homesickness.

"I found it in a little jade shop day before yesterday," she explained, fumbling in her bag. "It was in the most exquisite teakwood case, and I happened upon it by accident. I bought it—"

"You bought it!" He whistled in surprise, and caught his breath as she showed it to him.

"Of course. *What* is there about it that I don't know?" she asked impatiently.

"A lot." He scowled at the translucent stone. "But I don't see how—do you remember the transaction?"

"Very well. I'd bought a pair of earrings, and then, under some brocaded stuff, with dozens of other boxes, lacquered things, beauties—I saw what looked like a teakwood jewel box. I picked it up, and it flew open—I must have happened to touch the spring, you see—and there lay the hand. Isn't it exquisite? 'This is what I want,' I said to Chang Fui."

"The simplicity of it!" muttered the man beside her. "Go on."

"He told me it was the hand of Heaven." She frowned, trying to remember all that had passed between them. "And I thought of a Manchu proverb—d'you know it?—'the hand of Heaven is not as heavy upon the wicked,

as fortune is kind to him who follows her.' I don't know why I said it—one deals in flowery metaphors here—but he nodded, and closed the little carved case as some tourists came in. The thing fascinated me, though I knew I couldn't afford it. I thrust what money I had at him—quite a handsome sum, even for jade!"

"For the benefit of the tourists, he doubtless thought," mused the man. "And he gave you the box? It's unbelievable, but that proverb must have been the password!"

His excitement infected her. Wide-eyed, scenting the mystery her chance companion had enmeshed her in, she recounted the whole of the morning's adventure. For now, she knew, it was adventure.

"I don't see how you got away," he marveled. "Chang Fui has the best of reasons, of course, and he must believe there's a powerful plot afoot to get possession of the left hand of luck. He'd never lay your having gotten it as you did to anything but the most intricate design. He wants to negotiate with you, beyond a doubt—yet something happened to terrify you, didn't it?"

"No, I simply sensed peril," she insisted. "After I got out of the shop a beggar stopped me—a hideous bundle of rags and disease; he seemed to embody my fear. And then I felt trapped, horribly trapped in that dreadful street; watched by unseen eyes—and followed, closed in upon. I followed my instinct and ran; just ran, to get out of the quarter, until I reached the Bund, and your taxi!"

It was taking them toward Frenchtown, now, having passed the endless warehouses. A hot mist lay upon the Yangtze, shrouding the Hankow steamers, the dark trading hulks lay at the river's mouth. These last were symbols of China's degradation—opium hulks of another day. Mrs. Morley

always shuddered as she passed them, but she wasn't watching the water front now, already steaming under the brassy skies. Though it was still early the heat of the Eastern day had begun, and its languor lay heavily upon the city. She was more interested in the man beside her, into whose life she seemed to have been flung by Hwang-tai's small hand. He was scowling out at the curved-prowed traders; a baffled and weary look of frustration had settled upon his nice young mouth. And, somehow, it was all a part of the amazing morning. She touched his arm.

"I've told you everything. Now tell me what it's all about. This"—her fingers closed on the cold bit of jade—"isn't only the left hand of Hwang-tai. What else is it?"

They were drawing up to the second-rate hotel to which she had been reduced.

"I'm only guessing," he told her abruptly, "but if my guess is right, it's the key to coffers that hold a king's ransom—or a nation's ruin."

Ten minutes later they lounged over tiffin in the almost empty dining room of the Continental. They chatted of the heat, of Shanghai shops, and points of interest in true tourist fashion. And of home, with the indecently naked longing in voice and eyes that betrays all exiles. Then the waiter left them, and Lucinda heard his part of the story. For, after all, it was her story, too.

He was the normal young American, this blue-eyed companion of hers, she gathered, who, after the magnificent adventure of war, hadn't wanted to settle down in a swivel chair. He had wanted a life of more glamorous importance than was offered him in the New England city that was home. He sketched that life amusingly. Amusedly—but with the yearning look of the exile in his eyes. Lucinda knew it! So, through foreign connections, he

had maneuvered an engineering job in China, four years ago. It lasted only a year but the East had got into his blood. Besides, a girl—the girl—had broken their informal engagement, and married some one else. So he stayed. He had rather a lean time of it, for pride kept him from sending home for money. But it wasn't long before a certain influential Manchu gentleman, whose interests—Alec Foster smiled at this point—were varied, offered him a position as secretary.

This gentleman, by name Li-Yung, was officially engaged upon a historical work on Lama and Confucian temples. He had unearthed, among others, an ancient temple to Hwang-tai, goddess of chance, in Shansi. Or more accurately, under a certain part of Shansi, not far from where the sacred Wu-tai mountain guards buried Buddhas. It was a very interesting discovery, in more ways than one. Perfect relics of an early Ming dynasty came to the mandarin's house, and Foster, touched with the collector's fever, worked ardently on them. And then, with the mandarin, came Hwang-tai herself—in jade. Said Foster:

"I discovered her by accident, in the old boy's private study. Couldn't sleep one night—it was just before the rains began; hellish weather for white men—and wandered there to look for some veronal I'd had in my desk—I worked there once in a while. The door wasn't locked, and I walked in—upon Li-Yung kneeling before a hole in the mosaic wall, where a jade figure two feet high rested on a pedestal. Marvelous carving it was, too. And jeweled like an empress! Just a figure of a woman, holding out her hands, but it was creepy; and the mandarin, saying Manchu prayers to it!

"He heard me, and I rubbed my eyes. For as I looked, the goddess vanished, and nothing but mosaic wall faced me. I suddenly had a vision of vanishing

like that myself, while a floor or a tiled wall fitted into place! And Li-Yung, fanning himself, smiled. He told me I looked badly, perhaps a little feverish. I muttered something about the goddess, and he clapped for a servant. My man came, and was told to dose me with quinine, and take me to bed. I was feverish, or I'd never have done what I did. Flung myself upon that wall, trying to find the spring. Li-Yung laughed, and—he touched it, of course—the panel slid away. My coolie, knowing the way of such happenings better than I, fell slobbering on the floor. He never got up. Li-yung bent over him; something gleamed, and a trickle of crimson crawled toward me. I fled, and the next thing I knew it was a week later, and I was coming out of a pretty stiff attack of fever. Gratefully, you may be sure!"

He paused. A faint breeze swept them, moved a window curtain. He watched it, slashed at it idly with his stick. There was nothing behind it.

"I'll skip a good deal; that happened three years ago. I've been part of Li-Yung's household ever since. Until a fortnight ago, when the book was finished. I learned enough to guess much more; for one thing, Hwang-tai was worshiped often in Li-Yung's study. And yet, in that ancient temple in the Shansi hills, a jade image is enthroned on her restored altar, bowed to by Lama priests. Why should a jade figure be precious enough for an Oxford-bred Chinese gentleman—who is a power in the legation—to guard it in secret, kill a servant who glimpsed it, after filching it from a buried temple and putting a duplicate in its place?"

"It holds a secret, a secret beyond price, in the hollow of its hands. Three people know that secret; Li-Yung, Chang Fui, and a woman. A woman called 'English Kate.' She spent months at Li-Yung's, by the way. Chang Fui I know little about. He is

rich—very rich; a merchant who exports—many things. That is why he is necessary to Li-Yung. That is why the hand—the left hand of Hwang-tai, broken from that precious statuette, has been sent him. I saw it boxed, sent like any gift, carefully wrapped, through the mails, which are safer than any messenger, at Li-Yung's order. That was before I left his house; we dined together that evening—a mark of especial favor. Li-Yung's Pekingese, a sleeve dog of the imperial breed, waddled to my feet when the fish was brought on. I fed him a morsel before tasting it myself—and a minute later he rolled over dead. The cook was beaten."

Foster smiled.

"I—omitted dinner, and after an agreeable evening left. I came here to wait for English Kate. I'd an idea that she would come back from Hongkong to get that hand. And"—he leaned forward, his voice, as low as it was, carrying quivering emphasis to his companion—"by a fluke that couldn't happen again in a thousand years—everything is in our hands! It's miraculous, but it's so. You went there, and Chang Fui took you for Kate. She was probably due that day, and you could both be described in the same terms. You went at once to the box, found the spring, happened upon the 'open sesame.'"

"We're dealing with luck," the woman reminded him. "But Chang Fui knows now that it isn't English Kate who has the hand. And he's coming to bring me silks this afternoon. What did he mean?"

"That he will play with you, if I'm not mistaken." The dining room was invaded by some English people who took seats near them. "Have you a suite? Good!" approved Foster. Then a new thought occurred to him. "I'm taking for granted that you're involving yourself in this thing with me.

And, instead, I ought to be persuading you to take the first boat home."

"I'm already involved," she assured him dryly, "and home—I—it's nothing but a name."

For an electric moment their hands clasped and clung across the table. And fleetingly Alec Foster remembered that he did not even know her name.

They passed out into the lobby, where huge fans stirred the heavy air, and the sleek proprietor dozed behind the desk.

"A silk merchant came with his wares, madame; he is waiting upstairs," murmured the drowsy little Frenchman, fumbling for her key.

"He'll treat with you," prophesied Foster as the ancient elevator took them up. "He'll betray Li-Yung, because it will be to his advantage. He has failed Li-Yung, and he knows the penalty Li-Yung exacts. That means we'll learn the secret of the hand."

But the silk merchant was not in the shoddy public parlor at the end of the corridor. Lucinda inserted a key in her sitting-room door, and pushed. When it didn't give easily Alec Foster brushed past her, put his shoulder to the panels. Something at once heavy and yielding gave way.

Assuredly Chang Fui knew the penalty the Manchu exacted for treachery or folly. He lay on his face in a grotesque huddle across the threshold, a dagger hilt protruding between his shoulder blades, quite dead. And the door had been locked from the inside.

"He'll keep the secret," said Lucinda, waxen-pale. "Shall I phone down?"

"In a minute." Foster went to the window, lifted the sun blind. The street was empty, abandoned to the mid-day heat, but a heavy wistaria vine that trailed up to the balconied window nodded its purple flowers, mocking locked doors. Down the street a pock-marked beggar strummed a two-stringed lute.

Mrs. Morley shivered; her bag slipped from her wrist, and with a chilly sound the jade hand slipped from the bag and struck the matting on the floor, that was slowly being dyed red. It fell so that it pointed to the dead man, and the light struck it oddly, lending its veined translucence a wicked look of life.

Elwin Morley's white house on the hill stood untenanted after the death of the San Francisco importer; his summer place across the bay was empty, too, its flaunting magnificence neglected. And his widow, in a second-rate Shanghai hotel, pawned her jewels, one by one, and lived on the proceeds—when she didn't waste her substance on the irresistible loveliness of teakwood and jade and brocade.

For she hadn't yet gotten over the horror of the aftermath of Elwin's death. Neither had a good many other people who knew him well. The secret of his wealth, guarded so safely by himself in life, was an open and shameful story as soon as he dropped dead one day, in the midst of his corpulent middle age. If he'd shared it with one other person, it might never have been known; but his very caution betrayed him, in the end, when there was no one left to keep the secret. His tea and silk trading was a blind, just as his bales of silk, his chests of black tea and Eastern spices, that blocked many a San Francisco wharf, were blinds—for a small and precious cargo of opium that came with each shipment of other things.

No wonder he built the stucco palace on the hill; the summer place whose magnificence Sunday supplements made pictorial use of. He could afford to enhance his wife's blond beauty with pearls that had graced a queen and a courtesan. His revenue from his illicit and hideous traffic was inconceivably big. When Lucinda learned just

how big it was, she was stunned. It seemed to her that the immensity of his fortune was a mountain of shame and agony that kept piling up, weighing down upon her. His pearls, paid for in human degradation, were eternal tears. She wondered that they hadn't scorched her bosom, left a mark of shame upon her. His home, with its rare and perfect appointments, became a charnel house, piled with his dreadful dead.

The mountain towered over her; her only escape was to pull down the splendor Morley had built about her before it crushed her, and this she did. Nothing could have brought her more into the public eye than she already was than what she did next; for she deeded away to charities the entire amassment of her husband's fortune. She picked her charities well. It was to those that succored the lowest dregs of humanity that Morley's money went, and to the dregs themselves.

"He did that!" she told the sleek lawyer who took her once to a rescue house in the ugliest quarter of the Golden City, and a thing that had once been a woman, and was now a parchment-colored muminy with cunning eyes and vacant, terrible mirth, crawled over the floor of the ward called "hopeless." The lawyer saw his mistake—he had fancied that the sight of these derelicts would quench her ardor—and watched her endow the place magnificently. She was so pitifully grateful to the charity boards that accepted her donations. As though they might have spurned the tainted gift!

But, after all, the thing that shocked her most was the attitude of her friends. They enjoyed the scandal, and were frightfully sorry for poor, dear Lucinda—until she began flinging away her fortune. That, of course, was really too much. The affair would have died down, been forgotten, soon enough. It would have been the thing for her

to live very quietly for a time, perhaps travel, and in six months she could have opened up the town house, and begun having her intimates in to dine. They told her that, and she only looked at them.

It doesn't take long to get rid of a fortune, even when it's tainted. And in a very few months after Morley's death, his young widow shook the dust of San Francisco from her feet, and with nothing left but the shabby little income she had had when Morley married her, and her few personal belongings, sailed for China. She chose China, because it was the land of the lost.

And now, six months later, without enough money to get her back to America—when one has spent huge sums heedlessly for eight years it isn't easy to remember not to spend small sums—involved in a mystery as illogical as luck, quite friendless, except for one man who was entangled with her in the amazing web that a small jade hand had spun, she sat in a stuffy sitting room which she wouldn't be able to afford much longer and watched a coolie servant scrub away at a dark stain on the matting.

She had had a light dinner sent upstairs; it had been taken away, scarcely touched. It was early in May, but heat hung like a sudden blanket over the city, making any effort a torture. And she was tired; unbelievably tired.

That morning, in a room downstairs, there had been a farcical inquest over the body of Chang Fui, found dead in her sitting room the day before. One would have thought that a murdered Chinaman would have elicited a trifle more interest. Lucinda marveled at the supreme indifference of every one. The hotel proprietor, M'sieu Vaillon, lifted his shoulders in Gallic apology at such an occurrence in the room of madame, and cursed volubly the enemies of Chang Fui who had tracked him to the

hotel. He besought madame to let the matter rest. It might hurt his hotel—and life was cheap in Shanghai. Madame need not be nervous—American ladies never were—and the wistaria vine, by which the assassin had reached her sitting room, would be cut down without delay.

The consul came, making a social call of it and assuring her that the happening need not disturb her. He was a languid young man, already yellow from three years of office, and after a brief chat she decided not to mention the little green hand. The burden of his song was: "It's China, where anything can happen, and nothing's worth taking seriously after April."

His philosophy began to seem sound after she and Foster had puzzled for hours over the maddening bit of jade, with the stain in the matting which could not be scrubbed out to remind them of the price of the secret of Hwang-tai's left hand.

"It's only the key," despaired Foster at last. "Let's see it under that glass again, though—"

"It's the only key!" Lucinda corrected. "If it wasn't—"

"Our lives wouldn't be worth a Mexican. I believe you're right," he acceded thoughtfully. "By Jove! This isn't veined jadeite. Look here—this hand, the palm of this hand, is the finest specimen of inlay work I've ever seen!" His voice rose excitedly.

Lucinda's rose-tipped fingers pressed the cold surface.

"It's rubbed smooth, perfectly polished," he explained, "but it's inlay all the same. Why is it?"

"Patterned like veins," she mused. "We're growing warm." Together they studied her own small hand, faintly traced with blue beneath the fine, pale skin. "See—it's quite different, really. They swirl and twirl from the base of the index finger down—why, it isn't they—it's just one vein, twisting like

a rabbit's trail, ending where the wrist is broken. Queer."

Foster sprang to his feet.

"You're right! It is a trail, single, confused. D'you see what it is? The simplest, most obvious key in the world—to a treasure house!"

She stared up at him, and the thing he meant dawned upon her.

"Treasure!" she echoed, like an enchanted child. "You mean—somewhere under that buried temple of Hwang-tai?"

"Of course! And as for his excavations, his interest wasn't faked!"

"Boxer loot," she guessed.

"Bigger than that. The man is a power in Peking; too great a man to play for small stakes."

He whispered a name in her ear, a name that once shook the world, and they looked at each other in the lamplight, feeling small and unimportant; for that name had stood for one mighty empire, and had propped a tottering throne.

Then, though he hated to, he left her. There were certain things to be done for her protection. If they had come upon the true solution of the jade hand, then they were up against a bigger thing than he had imagined. And she, having the hand, was in no intangible peril. And yet, if they were right in thinking it the sole key to the treasure, whatever it was, that Hwang-tai guarded, its possession would involve in itself a measure of protection. And together they had hidden it in a secure hiding place.

He stepped out upon the cobbled street, marveling anew at the motley aggregate that is China. Two dilapidated taxis were drawn to a near-by curb; a red sedan, close-curtained, borne by servants nobly dressed, like a page from the past jogged by. Behind him, in the hotel lobby, some English and American drummers talked business over the inevitable highballs. And to

the wailing strains of a lute a journeying priest begged alms along the way. The Continental was only on the edge of the European quarter; around him, Foster knew, were walls that sheltered strange things. High-walled gardens with small, grilled windows offered their mysterious aspect to conjecture. There was a whispering, a rustling, that always seemed to be going on behind such walls, and aroused curiosity to its highest pitch. But it was not wise to satisfy one's interest in those impassable courts.

Foster whistled to a passing, empty, ricksha. He kept seeing the quick lift of a woman's chin; dark-gray eyes that held some haunting sorrow. She was an exquisite little person, Mrs. Morley. And he meant to see that she got out of this affair as quickly as possible. The East was no place for a woman. No place for a man, either! He fancied that he'd follow her boat soon enough. A beautiful name, Lucinda; it had a rare, fine flavor, like herself.

Two hours later Mrs. Morley sat wrapped in an airy negligee, brushing her hair for the night. It was beautiful hair, tawny, full of vitality, and well worth the care it got. She was wondering just how much damage the Eastern climate was doing to her good looks, and longing, in feminine fashion, for a séance at a certain beauty shop in San Francisco, when a hesitating knock sounded on her door. She thought first of the hidden hand, and impulsively thrust her own behind the mirror of the bureau, where, in a crack in the plaster, it lay concealed. She left it there; went to the door. A small, wistful-eyed Chinaman tendered a note.

"I Mista' Fosta's boy. I bling you letta'."

She slit the envelope, glanced hastily at the brief contents. It ran:

DEAR MRS. MORLEY: Please let my small servant bring you to my bungalow on Hatanman Street. Nothing's really wrong, but you

can be of inestimable service to me, if you will. Forgive me for routing you up and out at this hour; you'll be quite safe with Chong. I would come myself if I hadn't got a cracked head for my pains in settling a certain argument. Faithfully,

ALEC FOSTER.

P. S. Better not leave anything of value in your room.

"Is he badly hurt?" she asked the boy with a flare-up of fear.

"Head velly sore; he velly mad," observed the youth, with a sincerity that could not have been counterfeited.

"I'll be ready in five minutes."

Lucinda didn't think of the patent impropriety of going to a strange young man's bungalow at this hour of the night. The old Lucinda had been a stickler for most of convention's forms, simply because, as the young and lovely wife of a middle-aged man, she was tempted to break them often enough. And she was honorable to a degree. But none of that mattered now. All that mattered was that Alec Foster wanted her to come to him; he was hurt, needed her aid.

The postscript meant, of course, for her to take with her the hand. Or did it mean merely that she was to leave it in the hotel safe? Womanlike, she was more comfortable when her valuables were close to her person. When she had slipped into a thin black frock that brought out all the sheen of her hastily coiled hair, and drawn her wrap about her, she removed the hand from its hiding place. First she thrust it down her bodice, but the frock was fashioned tightly, and betrayed its presence there; then she thought of the cascading drapery that gave the gown its distinction. A moment later no one could have suspected that a lump of jade was concealed in the loops of crêpe that depended from the girdle on one side.

Foster's servant preceded her downstairs, into a waiting conveyance, and she was off. Twenty minutes later she

stepped out before a curiously built dwelling house that seemed quite remote from any other human habitation. She looked down the road they had come, and realized that some way back the ricksha men had turned off into a private drive. She was vaguely troubled, but the door opened—a massive thing it was—and she stepped inside. Could this hall of barbaric Eastern splendor belong to young Foster's bungalow? The great door shut behind her, and she fought down panic.

"Mr. Foster," she told the Chinaman who had bowed her in. "He is here?"

Her imperious manner buoyed her sinking heart, but she knew something was wrong.

"Upstairs, missee." The man gestured toward the beautifully carved staircase.

She looked over her shoulder to the door; the flunky stood between her and it. She had come thus far; she must go on.

"Upstairs," repeated the Chinaman's mild voice.

The weight of jade in the drapery of her gown gave her little comfort. She sped up the flight of stairs, sensing the beauty of brocade-hung walls, of lacquer and teakwood and porcelain that she passed. The house had been built originally by a rich American, and folding doors of a style popular thirty years back led from the hall into what had been the drawing-room; these stood open now, and Lucinda, with a sigh of relief, saw a tall figure at the farther end of the room.

Her relief was short-lived. Foster, very pale under the strip of bandage that bound his brow, turned, saw her, uttered an exclamation of horror.

"What in Heaven's name are you doing here?" he cried.

Yet she fancied, as he strode to her side, that the sight of her gave him a certain sort of comfort.

"Your note——" she faltered. "I

came, of course, when you sent for me."

"Note! I didn't send you any note!"

He took the crumpled sheet she held out to him, scanned it hastily.

"Clever! No wonder it brought you. It hasn't a counterfeit ring. And it's a creditable forgery of my very poor hand. But, my dear girl, why did you even chance it?"

Neither of them noticed the intimacy of his address.

"You were hurt, and you wanted me, I thought," she told him simply. "So we're both trapped. What's to be done?"

"Await the pleasure of our host, I fear."

She turned to the door by which she had entered, saw it glide shut with the smoothness of grooved steel. Impulsively she ran to it. She couldn't even shake it, and she experienced the horror of locked doors, imprisoning walls, that is one of the elemental fears, a heritage from the first man.

Then they both heard a faint sound, and from behind one of the brocades that decked the walls of the room stepped a small, an exquisite personage in a yellow robe. The mandarin—for it was he—inclined his head. Lucinda thought she had never seen so lineless a countenance. His was the face of a serene Buddha—the bronze Buddha that crouched in one corner of the room. His features expressed nothing more than the necessary modeling. He had a mouth, a nose, for the same reason that his skull was round instead of square. And his eyes were only oblique bits of onyx, set into place by a hand that loved symmetry.

"The simplicity of your race is truly delightful," remarked Li-Yung in low, placid tones. "Present me to Mrs. Morley, Foster."

"How long is this farce to continue?" inquired the American.

"Ask your charming associate." Li-

Yung bowed to Lucinda. "Won't you be seated?"

She walked to the window, which was low-silled, but barred. The night was dark, but from the light of the room she glimpsed the shimmer of water below. Listening intently, she heard its faint lap, which sounded directly beneath the window. Where was she?

"This house is very well situated," Li-Yung answered her unspoken thought. "Many years ago the dwelling of a high official stood on this site—it is the Whang-Poo you hear murmuring beneath you, rushing down, drawn down to the Yangtze. That official, legend tells us, consigned many a secret to the deep water. It is very deep, and its current is strong; a safe hiding place."

Lucinda shivered, and Foster, whose head throbbed feverishly from the blow that had struck him down an hour earlier in his own bungalow, spoke.

"So delicately put, Li-Yung, that I'm not sure whether you are advising us against that route of escape, or threatening us with a wet, secluded grave."

The mandarin ignored him.

"Mrs. Morley, I must have the hand of Hwang-tai. You have it with you, beyond a doubt. Your rooms have already been searched, and the hand is not there; nor is it in the hotel safe. You have no deposit box at any bank, and it has not changed hands. Mr. Foster has not been in possession of it, I have ascertained. It would be wiser to give it to me of your own will."

"I haven't got it," said Lucinda.

As he spoke, she saw Foster shake his head ever so slightly; his lips, she could have sworn, formed a silent "no."

She didn't think of the value of the hidden treasure; that wasn't as important as the despair in Alec Foster's tired, bloodshot eyes. Whatever it was, it meant more than life itself to him, she guessed.

"I haven't got it——" She let her voice break in a terrified half scream as Li-Yung, with triumph in his narrow eyes, turned and struck a gong. That movement of his gave her the opportunity she had been seeking. She took the hand from the fold of her gown, thrust it behind her, out of the window, on the narrow ledge. When he turned she was leaning against a red-lacquer cabinet, both hands to her pallid face.

Through the doorway behind the brocade a woman came at his summons; a handsome, yellow-haired creature clad in the garb of a Manchu lady. She was blond, blue-eyed, but her skin, fair as it was, was faintly overlaid with gold, and her cheek bones betrayed more than a trace of Mongol blood. This was the woman who, but for the intervention of chance itself, should have got luck's left hand from the dead silk merchant.

"This woman has the hand," said Li-Yung swiftly. "Search her, Kate. Do not forget her hair, her shoes; it is on her person. She has been watched every instant she has been in this house, and she had it when she came."

"This way," said English Kate.

Lucinda tried to wrench away, found herself helpless in the other woman's grasp. She saw Foster stagger to his feet, saw Li-Yung whip out a gleaming weapon, and force him back.

"I'll come," she moaned, and let herself be led into an adjoining chamber.

When she came out, ten minutes later, disheveled, furious, but still triumphant, the Manchu's placidity was threatened.

"So you have managed to hide it in spite of my vigilance." His bland face took on a sinister, passionless aspect as his yellow eyelids fell. "Neither one of you leave this house until it is in my hands. And if you are still stubborn—— Go to the window, Mrs. Morley."

She started in very real terror, which he misunderstood. He had not seen her place the hand at the extreme edge of the window ledge, and it could not be seen from the room.

"You do not fancy that wet, secluded grave Mr. Foster mentions. It is not pleasant to contemplate; certainly not to me. Yet, if either of you should be traced to my house, you could be traced no farther. That water you gaze down upon runs swift and deep—so deep that, in this particular spot, its exact depth has never been sounded." The threat ended in a plaintive little sigh, and the Manchu fingered the sash of his gorgeous robe.

Lucinda, with a sickish feeling, remembered that he had returned his toy-like, deadly dagger to its resting place in his sash when she had turned docile. All this couldn't be real! And Foster, as if he had quite collapsed from the pain of his wounded head—the white bandage was stained red above his left temple—sat in a half-conscious huddle on the couch.

"This is Shanghai," Lucinda muttered aloud. "It couldn't happen."

"This is China!" corrected Li Yung. "And I—I"—his slit eyelids opened; he swayed like a man under a spell; his eyes, mad eyes, for the moment, were terrible to look upon—"I am China's soul."

The man huddled on the divan seemed to grow tense. Lucinda pulled herself together. Nothing but her wits would ever save them.

"And if you consign us both—to those unsounded depths, what good will it do you?" she asked. "I am a woman, and I have a woman's cunning, Li-Yung. I tell you"—her gray eyes never wavered as they met his—"the hand is hidden where neither you nor any one else can ever find it. And with no one to show you the way——"

"You will be made to tell."

"Supposing," she murmured, "that I

had already destroyed it—it's an evil thing, Hwang-tai's left hand, dealing destruction to him who holds it."

Li-Yung laughed.

"Elwin Morley's wife would not destroy the only key to untold treasure," he mocked at her. "No, Mrs. Morley, you have risked your life a good many times to get that key. You would not destroy it, knowing it to be the only map in existence of the underground vaults that hold—millions!"

So they had been right. Was Alec Foster listening, or was he as nearly unconscious as he seemed?

"How should I know it was the only key?" she whispered. The only key to what, she asked herself. She was in peril, she knew, desperate peril, and all because that jade hand meant more than mere treasure to the heavily breathing man across the room.

"How did you know that a prince's ransom in opium from the poppy province was hidden under the temple of Hwang-tai?" asked the Manchu. "Your husband, he was a clever, a very clever man. Even I do not know how he discovered that secret of mine, even though we dealt together for so many years."

Opium. Treasure! So that was the thing that lay beneath Hwang-tai's left hand. Lucinda raised both hands to her confused head. Opium—the horror that she had fled from. And the Manchu thought her in possession of the secret; thought she was risking her life to get hold of that fortune in the drug. But he was going on.

"Perhaps you do not know, after all, how precious that little hand is," continued the silky voice. "But when I tell you that four years ago that opium was borne down into that hidden labyrinth, night by night, week by week, month by month, until a fortune lay there—a fortune that, in gold, would buy food and guns for armies—armies—"

The breathing across the room seemed to cease, but Li-Yung, with mad-

ness in his eyes once more, heard only the words that brought his dream to form.

"Armies to sweep China clean of treachery, and greed—white greed. Armies to enthrone again the Son of Heaven, and bow before him. All this, from those chests that lie buried. They are safe, quite safe, lying there. Six men unearthed that labyrinth, and when the last of the treasure was brought to its hiding place, they sealed it up again so no man could tell that there had ever been an opening there. The time had not yet come. Those men died. For China! They knew too much; they *might* have proved faithful living, but the dead *never* break the faith." Li-Yung smiled.

"And all that there was to tell of that great treasure lay in the hand of Hwang-tai; only she could show the way to it again, for the sealing up of that hiding place was cunningly done; between slabs of ancient rock is an explosive that, if disturbed, will leave only dust and ruin to tell the tale. The Sacred Hills themselves would be leveled, should a fool try to reach the treasure without being guided by Hwang-tai's hand. Only she knows the safe passage, beneath her altars.

"And now—now the time has come. The faithful are awaiting the hand. For the last time, tell me where it is!"

"Never!" Lucinda knew at last why Foster held the safety of that hand so dearly.

Li-Yung's relentless, yellow face was close to hers, and it symbolized the cruelty, the ruthlessness of the East. She, a mere woman, stood between him and his heart's lust—a China of old gods, old kings. Yet it wasn't his face she saw, just then; it was a yellow face, like parchment, of jutting bones and pouched, hideous skin; of lips, loose-hanging over blackened teeth; of eyes, mere slits that had seen terrible things. That face, the face of the woman who

had come crawling over the floor to her in the Home of Mercy, would haunt her dreams forever unless—

Li Yung bent over the man on the divan, flung a copper ewer of water that stood on the floor over him. Foster sighed, sputtered, moved.

"I'd give a good deal for a smoke," he suggested, fumbling for a cigarette.

Li-Yung struck his hands together.

"A brazier of red coals," he told the servant who appeared. They came, and Li-Yung presented it to Foster, who lighted a cigarette.

Then, before Foster knew what was happening, he was grasped around the waist by a pair of powerful, yellow arms, and he saw Li-Yung take something—it was a small fire iron, red-hot—from the brazier and approach the woman.

"Do not force me to this, Mrs. Morley," he purred in that flat, Oriental voice of his.

Foster struck desperately at the man who held him; realized his impotence. Nothing mattered now but Lucinda's safety. Why had he jeopardized it so long?

"Stop!" he screamed. "Stop, I say! The hand's within reach—on the window ledge. Take it, and be damned to you!"

The poker sizzled upon the floor, and Li-Yung sprang like a cat toward the window. But Lucinda was too swift for him; she got there first, and a moment later something small and hard splashed in the water below.

"The river runs swift and deep," she reminded him. "Your treasure"—she shut her eyes wearily—"will rest undisturbed. It will not curse any nation, now."

Li-Yung stared at her.

"You are a brave woman!" he said at last. Then, as if the coals in the brazier, burning out to embers now, were his ruined dreams, he folded his hands

in his yellow sleeves, contemplated them with the inscrutable dignity of his kind.

"I admire your courage, and I feel nothing but friendship for your friend, my secretary of former days," he continued placidly. "But, unhappily, you know too much. You cannot be permitted to depart. Mr. Foster's connection with the secret service of his country makes it inadvisable."

Lucinda flung an understanding little look at him.

Foster, released by the yellow man, moved, glowing cigarette dangling from his hand. There was an acrid odor of something burning, and in an instant the brocaded wall near the door was a sheet of flame, and from it the blue coat of the coolie caught. Screaming with fear, he plunged toward the great door; it opened, framed now in fire that leaped and spread from tinder-dry silk to the old woodwork of the house.

"Don't breathe, darling!"

Foster wrenched off his coat, which was dripping wet from Li-Yung's ministrations, wrapped it about Lucinda's tawny head, and snatched her up in his arms. Their path was not obstructed; Li-Yung could only do battle with the common foe, and the Chinese servitors downstairs were utterly demoralized. Lucinda, smoke smarting in her throat, head hidden against Foster's wet shoulder, knew dimly that they had escaped, felt, after stumbling flight down the steps, a rush of cool air. And quite content to lie still in these strong young arms, to count the heartbeats just under her cheek, she let oblivion claim her.

A month later, on the mail boat to America, a pair of honeymooners watched Hongkong fade into a purple shadow on the China Sea. On deck and in the smoking room those two were subjects of interested discussion, as honeymooners are sure to be on a small vessel.

"Pretty woman, dam' pretty woman," grunted the colonel over his bridge. "They look indecently well pleased with life, too. In this steamin' heat, at that. That's romance!"

Said the colonel's wife:

"This young Foster, my dear, has done all sorts of fascinating things in China, they say. He was in the intelligence department, during the war, and afterward they took him into the secret service. He'd have gone up and up if he'd stayed, but he meets somebody's yellow-haired widow, marries her out of hand, and resigns. Such a pity! She's older than he, don't you think?"

Said the pretty woman, whose hand was being efficiently held under cover of a flimsy Hongkong journal:

"I'm hideously superstitious, Alec; just supposing that I hadn't fancied that jade hand, in the first place, or that I hadn't taken it back to Chang Fui's shop that day. I wouldn't have jumped into your machine, or ever seen you!"

"I'd have seen you," he assured her, and they both believed it, "luck notwithstanding and to the contrary. She helped, of course—we'll give her her due."

His wife made a charming face at him, and he looked cautiously about.

No one was in sight but the colonel, and his back was turned. Foster spread out the paper, and prepared to kiss Lucinda cleverly behind it, while the opportunity offered itself. But he didn't just then, after all. Silently Lucinda pointed to a brief paragraph, disclosed by unfolding the paper, and together they read it.

DEATH OF NOTED HISTORIAN.

Li-Yung, whose excavations of ancient temples have made him an authority on the subject, has been killed while making further inroads upon the buried temple of Hwang-tai, in the northern part of Shansi. It is said that he expected to find traces of a buried city beneath this temple. There was a curious explosion, which lends credence to his hypothesis, as some sort of cavity evidently existed beneath the substrata. Complete wreckage is the result of the mysterious explosion, and the temple, a beautiful relic from the first Ming dynasty, is demolished. The mandarin's body, badly mutilated, was recovered, and is being brought to Peking for burial.

That brought back a great deal to the two lovers; muted them for a little while. But even that seemed dim and far off as the ship bore them into the opalescent west. For empires crumble; treasure turns to dust; and neither life nor death is the immortal part. And, exchanging that postponed, clandestine kiss, they knew it!

THE CIRCUIT

YES, love should give and give without a thought

Of recompense; and yet one needs to know

That the red tide whose unrestricted flow
Drains our best vigor has not ebbed for naught.

The ships we send with spirit vintage freight,

Did they win safe to harbor long ago,

Or have green sea oblivions laid them low

In darkly glimmering depths, unknown, unsought?

When the glad energy of the soul throbs out

Through the continuous, hope-imagined wire,

Give us the answer, the vibrating token

That love has reached its aim beyond a doubt,

Has been transformed to power and radiant fire!

Show us the living circuit is unbroken!

CHARLES WHARTON STORK.



Madame Staminov

By Ernest L. Starr

Author of "Three Ways of Looking at It,"

"The Worst Man in Europe," etc.

GAUNT, stark, up from the ranks, Premier Staminov towered like a giant above the peasant hordes who put him into power.

"We are now able to do what we will!" he cried when he addressed the Peasants' Congress in Belcharest, the capital.

He stood at the very edge of the platform, washed by a shaft of sunlight from a window far above the gallery. His face was like that of one who preaches a new crusade, fired with purpose which sways men to endeavor or demolition.

So eager and dramatic was his utterance that it brought a stronger warning than usual from the physician in attendance. A little door leading from the platform suddenly fell open and a voice whispered:

"Careful! Save your strength."

Back there Bernhard Greffe, the king's surgeon, was watching. No one but he knew how close to the edge of exhaustion the premier was carrying himself.

Perhaps in the sincerity of this professional undertaking Greffe forgot the strange anomaly of his position—that he, an adherent and a friend to the young king, should be safeguarding the health of the one man from whom the king had most to fear: Premier Staminov, the leader of this sweeping rush of peasants into power.

"We who work and produce," Stami-

nov went on, "if we want to we can make a president of our king, with a close check on his power. If we want to we can even——"

A hush fell over that eager assemblage. Silently they swayed forward. They wanted to hear their premier say the thing that would be a final declaration of their power.

"If we want to we can even——"

The unfinished sentence hung in the air like something electrical. Men with the smell of the soil clinging to their gay coats scanned the premier's tense face while he held them with the force of the inference he had drawn.

The premier's gaze turned to the women's gallery. In the front row was his wife, surrounded by the womenfolk of these hard-breathing peasants on the floor. Madame Staminov was dressed as they were—in gaudy fabrics rich with overlaid color, lawn-covered breasts slipping from embroidered bodices, hair held in by the white-and-crimson head-dress of the people. Her eyes blazed back at the premier as he held his audience with that unfinished sentence, answering his far-flung question with something very close to a command.

Quite over their heads Premier Staminov was asking her whether he should tell these people the extent of their strength, their dangerous ability to bring a king's brow to the dust, and turn his crown into currency. Elsa Staminov shook her head, a quick, em-

phatic denial, unobserved by those around her. For an instant longer her husband hesitated, then slowly his arm sank. The sentence was never finished. Elsa leaned back in her seat with a little smile of satisfaction.

At first the people had feared their premier's marriage into the court circle, to a girl who bore a title centuries old; known everywhere for her brilliancy and daring, honored even by the friendship of the king. It had taken months to beat down their reservations and distrust. She had sat at the head of her table listening with what looked like friendly approval to their wild, extravagant theorizing, couched in the patois of the mountains or the beer-smeared vernacular of the streets. When in the end the premier's voice was always raised for moderation, it was because Elsa willed it so.

She had brought him a sealed heart when they married. Yet she had given him a passionate friendship which almost measured up to love. Not every man can tell the difference. Staminov, freshly elevated to such private and public honor, could not. She gave him so sure an understanding, an appreciation of these new conditions so keen and fair, that he had come to depend on her judgment far more than he realized.

The day she became certain that she could bend him to her will, she sent a message to the king in Schönberg Castle outside the city. Just two words—"I control"—yet they provided the king and his advisers the easiest moment they had known in many months.

That was the only sign she had given. She refused to run the slightest risk by meeting her old friends of the court under any except the most casual and daylighted conditions.

A few days ago the king had commanded. She met him in a place her maid provided—the home of the girl's people in the poorer quarter—disguised,

hating the subterfuge and the senseless danger of it.

"I am not a spy, sir," she told him, looking at him squarely.

The king was her own age. They had played together as children, in the lost days of tranquillity, before their country had been dragged into war, beaten, and left at the mercy of its underlings.

"No one knows better than you why I married him, and what I gave up when I did," said Elsa. "To serve my country and my king—that's what I want to do as well as God will let me. But this thing of telling tales, of being a miserable clearing house for Staminov's confidences and your curiosity—I can't do that. Don't forget I am his wife, and that you made me so."

There was a year of self-control to the young king's credit, and it did not fail him now. From the day his father fled the country and he himself had been wrapped in the pretentious and all but meaningless robes of kingship, Victor had played the beneficent, easy-going ruler, while all the time he wanted nothing so much as to dominate his turbulent people with the old-time force of absolutism. If they had known his intention was to let them talk themselves into political contentment, to make their own leaders satisfied with compromise, and then to crack his whip over their consenting heads—they wouldn't have listened so contentedly to the premier's constant counsel to "build on what we have, rather than overthrow the old order entirely."

The premier's moderation was due solely to Elsa's influence, the slow, sure domination of his public policy which had been her original objective. Whether this represented a fundamental change of viewpoint on which he could count in the coming crisis, Victor had no way of knowing. Only Elsa could tell him, and that accounted for the command which he knew she would obey.

"All I want to know is whether he will hold fast or be carried away by the fanaticism of his followers. You can tell me that!"

Victor took her hands, smiling down at her with the old familiarity; but for Elsa there could be no friendship, not as she had once loved to interpret it, with one whom she was serving as she served the king. She held her slim body away, studying him with sharpened vision, finding unsuspected possibilities of ruthlessness and cynicism.

"So much depends on you, little Elsa," he said, his voice touching her almost like a caress. "You must let me keep in closer touch with you."

"Not as a conspirator, sir."

"No, as a patriot, Elsa."

"A pretty name for the same thing, sir."

Victor's voice suddenly became authoritative.

"I insist that you send me a daily message."

Elsa took his measure, eye to eye.

"I can't do that," she replied.

Her thoughts turned back to those early days of her marriage, when such a request from the king would not have shocked her as it did now. It would have fitted in with the dreary intention of her life. Yet marriage to the premier had wrought its subtle changes. His love and confidence had made her a wife, instead of the married courtesan they intended her to be when they put her in his path to tempt and trick him into harmlessness. Out of a maze of crossed inclinations she had arrived at the only possible compromise between her several obligations to country, king, husband, and to her own heart, in which a tortured dream still held its place.

"Have you learned to love your premier?" Victor sneered.

"That's neither here nor there," Elsa replied. "It means very little to you where my love lies. Remember, I'm not serving your personal ambition alone, no

6—Ains.

matter what I undertook to do at the start. It's something larger than that. I'll do my best, but you'll have to judge me by my work."

Just once before Elsa had defied this divine-righted young Victor. It happened a year before to-day's dangerous assembling of the Peasants' Congress. Then she had no more idea of marrying the premier than of making love to her own chauffeur. It was Greffe, the king's surgeon, to whom her devotion had been promised—Greffe who had filled her girlhood dreams, Greffe whom she adored because he had gone out into the world and accomplished things in spite of title, position, wealth; and returning had become a veritable savior to Belcharest's ill and maimed. He had even turned a wing of his house into a little hospital, a professional workshop where he could care for urgent cases. Their engagement would soon have been announced, when suddenly the king called them into the strangest conference two lovers ever faced. Her defiance was beaten down by the logic of the king's demand. In the end she had given up her lover and had promised to marry a man she had never known.

A year ago, yet the bitterness of it dug as vindictively into her heart to-day—while she sat there in the women's gallery feeling the magic of the premier's oratory—as if it were only an hour ago that Victor had beaten down her resistance and turned her love into a mocking memory. She lived it through again, very still and cold in the midst of this eager enthusiasm. Her thoughts turned aside to the personalities and desires which together had wrapped her slim shoulders in the mantle of obligation they bore to-day. Her eyes began to see visions in which he had no part—dreams of the little while ago which had held just one exquisite aim.

Growing up almost alone, titled and castled in her own right, she had lived

her life quite as she wished. The steady influence had always been her love for Bernhard Greffe. The six months of each year which she spent with an English aunt sent her back always surer of her heart. Greffe had already set out on the career which made him famous. Elsa adored the determination with which he followed his star. No amount of insistence from the aunt, whose social prestige dominated at least three capitals in Europe, could shake her devotion to him.

Lovers came and lovers wooed. Each heard a proud confession of a promise given long ago, which she meant to keep to the very end. The slim perfection of her, the amazing depth of her smiling eyes and the facile mind that made them deep—these were things that many men had wanted to possess. Elsa weighed them all against her lover, not so much to prove their shortcomings as to add an attribute to him.

"But he's dropped the title," protested her aunt, Lady Aynsworth.

"It's a handicap to him," Elsa explained.

"Rot!"

"It is in his profession," Elsa insisted.

"Why follow a profession when one doesn't have to?" Lady Aynsworth complained.

"Because he means to do something better in the world than merely giving money away. Bernhard thinks it a finer thing to *earn* the title of 'doctor' than inherit anything his father left him."

Four years of chaos passed. The coming of peace, Elsa thought, would bring their long separation to an end. Greffe had done a splendid work throughout the war. Under the pressure of necessity he had found new ways to lessen pain and preserve life. He made a reputation which circled the scientific world. Home again, he threw himself whole-heartedly into the task

of alleviating the suffering of the capital and his country.

The wages of peace proved to be first political unrest, then social upheaval. Elsa and Greffe, born to the king's side of the controversy, found themselves swept into class prejudice of the strongest kind. Victor attempted the old king's methods of control. Almost overnight the national assembly turned popular, with the balance of power in the hands of his opponents. Revolution impended. Staminov, the man who had organized the people and shown them how to grasp their power, became premier.

Laws were passed that shook the capital to its foundation. No one knew to what lengths the premier would go. Anything was possible. The king was powerless. Staminov was supreme. Perhaps nowhere else could the fate of a nation have been so completely controlled through the force of one man's personality.

Victor had a single argument to advance in that unhappy conference of Elsa, Greffe, and himself—"for the country!" He used it over and again, beating down Elsa's protests and prayers, disregarding her tears; turning Greffe's remonstrance into black, disheartened acceptance of the situation. He made them see that the only way to escape such a fate as their Russian neighbor's was by controlling the man who held the country in his grasp. The last remaining chance was that of changing his point of view so subtly that he would not know the thing was done, of bending his intentions to moderation, of taming him as only a woman could—his woman.

Elsa went into her relation with Staminov open-eyed, willing to put aside the love that had filled her life, admitting the necessity, but not the right, of this greater obligation. She closed her heart, thinking her love for Greffe would live unlesened in its sanctuary.

She caught the premier's eye with the calculated fascination of a courtesan. She edged her way into his thoughts with the precision of a sculptor, giving him an unfelt and perfect loyalty.

Then suddenly she realized that the ardor she had won from Staminov, the strength and passion of his love, were weaving a strange, unwelcome spell over her. What she meant to do for her country became a thing she wanted to do for the man himself—to hold him back from the extravagance which his years of striving had produced. He gave her his inmost thoughts and gentlest dreams. He let her see the vision which had led him to the heights. By showing her his soul he set himself apart from these others of his class whom she scorned. He became an individual, enormously segregated from the rest of the world, some one whom she understood, pitied, and admired more than any man she had ever known.

Her love for Greffe remained the same. She told herself that nothing could change it. Sometimes when Staminov held her in his arms she would let herself imagine that it was Greffe who drew her up so close to him. Then she would turn cold and cower away from the conflict of emotions that gripped her. Days had come when she feared to meet him, others when she longed to see him even in the distance; and not a day passed without a new arraignment of Victor, whose calculation had taken freedom and certainty out of her life.

A roar of applause marked the end of the premier's speech. Elsa hurried from the gallery, through an unfrequented passage, to the little room off the platform. She opened the door impetuously, expecting to find the premier resting from his exertion; but he was still outside, talking with the people who thronged around him.

Only Greffe was in the room. They looked at each other. Her eyes were

shining, and her hands unconsciously went out to him. He did not even bow, so closely was he studying her. His gray eyes darkened as he watched. There are things a lover knows without being told. Elsa felt what he was thinking, but she would not admit his right to care less because she had fulfilled her promise to the premier. That was in the bargain.

"Those peasant clothes!" he said.

To Greffe they stood for Elsa's affiliation with the commonplace, and her loss to him.

"After all," Elsa said, "it's the national costume."

She said it only to be saying something, trying to cover the hurt she felt.

"I see," Greffe replied, hurting her further with the meaning he put into the words. If he were believing that Elsa had learned to find a certain satisfaction in the life she was living, in a moment he had an unexpected verification.

Staminov came quickly into the room. He brushed past Greffe with a nod, went to Elsa, and caught her in a quick embrace.

"I did it, Elsa," he said proudly, "I've made them think our way! We couldn't keep these people from assembling, but I believe we can control them. Every minute I could feel your thoughts and your support."

He buried his mouth in her hair and in the curve of her neck. Then he turned to Greffe, who was waiting behind him.

"Ah, doctor, I heard your warning," he said, as he wearily took his chair, "and I think I needed it to-day more than ever."

He held out his wrist and closed his eyes while Greffe counted. Then, at a motion from Greffe, he bared his breast to the telltale cup of the stethoscope. His tired breathing seemed to fill the room. Presently Greffe took the instrument away, closing its black case

so quietly that Staminov flared his eyes, and said:

"Well?"

"It's just as I've told you," Greffe answered. "You must be very careful. Rest more."

"How can I?"

"Avoid excitement. That's the main thing," Greffe cautioned. "Otherwise, it might—snap."

Staminov looked at him thoughtfully, then shook his head in unbelief.

"I'm strong," he said with a confident smile, "and I'm going to stay so."

Some one called him. Little groups were outside in the hall, still arguing among themselves. They wanted the premier's opinion. The moment he left the room Elsa went to Greffe.

"Tell me the truth," she whispered.

"Does it mean so much to you?" Greffe asked.

"I want to know," she urged.

She couldn't tell him what it had done to her to face them both together, to be held by the arms that owned her and denied those that had been hers from the beginning. In her thoughts she had never fallen away from her love for Greffe. Yet the nearness and the needs of Staminov had worked their subtle changes. His intensity and his faith had moved her deeply. During the moments just passed she had wavered between exaltation, fear, and a vast, confused uncertainty. She told herself that of the two, one would never know and the other would always understand.

"He could go out like a light," Greffe told her, "literally from life into darkness—in a moment."

Greffe's face was close to hers, filled with questioning.

"Elsa," he whispered, "if that happens you'll be mine again!"

She shrank away from him.

"How could you say that!"

"Forgive me," he said. "It's only because I love you so."

Because she knew it was true and

that she had shut him out of his kingdom, she forgave him. For a moment she felt the old overpowering sense of loss. She saw the glint of their dream again. She touched his face with lingering fingers.

"You do love me, Elsa?" It was part question and part a statement of belief.

"Don't ask me that," she said.

The light faded from his sensitive face.

"Won't you tell me?"

"I can't, Bernhard—not now."

"You needn't speak," he begged.

"Just look at me. Tell me with your eyes, and I can stand the rest."

"You're making it harder," Elsa said.

"If you won't tell me," Greffe answered, "then there's nothing left for me to think except that you—you've changed."

"Don't!" Elsa cried.

A little later, in her own room, she was tearing her peasant's dress to shreds. Her maid came just in time to see her tears and hear her little cry of hurt and anger. She gathered up the mass of silk, embroidery, and lawn.

"It's your national costume, ma'am!" she exclaimed.

"Throw it away. Don't let me see it again," said Elsa, as she swept into her dressing room. But she would have been puzzled and uneasy if she had seen the sly expression of distrust that filled the woman's face, the knowing nod with which she seemed to record the scene as if for future, hostile use.

When Staminov returned Elsa was waiting in her boudoir, fresh and lovely, with her slim perfection emphasized in each clinging fold of her thin robe. This was the hour that Staminov liked best. Until a servant knocked to give them time to dress for dinner it was never interrupted.

"You're tired," she said, putting an additional cushion behind his head.

"Very."

He stretched his length on the yielding couch.

"Were there any other developments after I left?" said Elsa.

"Their old growl—revenue."

"What do they want now?"

"To reduce the expenses of the government and use the saving to ease up taxes."

"Is it practical?" Elsa asked.

"If Victor would cut his grants in two," said Staminov, almost thinking aloud, "and turn back half the money to the country, it would make things easier for everybody—particularly himself. Kings are damned costly."

"That's possible," Elsa said.

"Quite possible," agreed the premier, with an indulgent smile, "and much more helpful to him if he would propose the thing himself. I don't want to put it before him. He hates me. Do you suppose you could see him?"

Elsa caught her breath. If she agreed, Staminov might find in it a willingness to conspire. That was the one position she had always avoided. She had gained her influence over him by directness, advocating moderation for the sake of peace and stability, with never a suggestion of benefit to the old régime. This might even be a test by which he was measuring her loyalty to himself, knowing as he did her old friendship with the king.

"Would that be wise?" she asked.

"I don't see why not," replied Staminov. "If you were to do it at once and bring me his offer in writing, I could present it to the assembly before they make any sort of demand. What do you say, my Elsa?"

"I don't want to do it," came the answer, "but I will."

"It won't be so easy," Staminov cautioned. "Our brave young king isn't marked by unselfishness."

"No," Elsa agreed quietly.

Staminov held out his arms, and made a place for her beside him.

"Do you know," he said, "that without you I could never have carried on so smoothly?"

"That makes me very happy," Elsa answered.

"You are the one woman in the world who could have done it. Through all the years I've worked for this I've thought that when the time came I'd serve the people best by sweeping every bit of the old order out—Victor, council, aristocracy, and all. I didn't think any one, least of all a girl, could ever show me a better way of doing it. You're a wonder-woman, dear."

Elsa shook her head smilingly.

"Kiss me," he said, drawing her head down to his.

Her face glowed. She felt a rarer satisfaction, a closed approach to happiness, than at any time during her marriage to the premier. After all, she had seen the thing clearly.

When the familiar knock came it was Elsa's maid who stood outside instead of the usual manservant. The woman brought a card to the premier. He read it and nodded shortly. Elsa did not know until hours later that it said:

Doctor Greffe asked the king for an appointment to discuss a matter of great importance. They are together now. Anton, the king's valet, will listen—and report later.

Staminov answered Elsa's inquiring glance by saying:

"Just a reminder of the committee meeting to-night."

If Elsa had been less intent on her own thoughts, she wouldn't have missed the uncertainty and evasion of the answer.

There were two rooms out at Schönberg Castle where Victor felt free from any sort of observation, his private study and the adjoining bedroom. No one had unquestioned access to them except Anton, his body servant; and Anton was above suspicion. So it happened

that neither Victor nor Greffe noticed the frequency with which the man came in to fill their glasses. The conversation was low-pitched, it is true; but now and then their voices rose high enough to carry to the bedroom where Anton waited when he was not serving them.

The rooms were filled with the show of power which those who are losing it are careful to maintain. The canopied bed, with its golden crown and laurel-circled monogram, might have been made for Napoleon. Victor, in his purple dressing gown, completed the picture.

"All that you've told me may be true," Victor expanded, "but I'm confident we did the right thing. You've seen for yourself what we've gained." He waved the point aside, with little consideration of what the right thing had cost both Elsa and Greffe. "The mistake was made," he went on, stopping to sip his wine, "when we let her marry him. If she'd taken him as a lover, she wouldn't have been so damned conscientious about it."

"Remember, sir, we're speaking of Elsa!" Greffe put in sharply.

"Elsa is any woman in politics," continued Victor urbanely. "She will believe what the man she loves wants her to. You say Elsa has fallen in love with her husband. Too bad. That weakens her grasp. We must do something about it."

Greffe's face was white. His eyes were fixed on Victor with a look of hard determination.

"You sent Elsa in to do a certain work."

"We, my dear boy," Victor interrupted, "we!"

"You lie!" said Greffe. "Do you think I would have sent her away from me?"

Victor drew himself up, staring, shocked. Greffe waited. Victor had nothing to say.

"Elsa was to do a certain work for

you, for the country," continued Greffe. "As long as you had her loyalty and I her heart, she could do it well. But the moment Staminov roused her love, her usefulness to you came to an end. She will see the whole situation through his eyes. I know her better than you. She'll stop at nothing. She's on the edge of her big emotional crisis—the fire that I thought would be for me. I gave it up, though in my heart I thought it was merely a postponement. It's about to become final, and I tell you I'm through. I'm going to pull her out of it—out of his life, out of your schemes, out of this muck she's had to mix with."

"Good!" Victor cried. "That's just what I want—partly."

"What do you mean?"

"Make her fall in love with you again, but—" Victor hesitated, then laughed. He leaned forward confidentially. "Win her back for yourself, my friend, but don't take her away from Staminov quite yet. You can make her very happy, and she can still go on with her—work."

Greffe got abruptly to his feet.

There is something in being a king, after all; it keeps one from getting slapped. Moreover, it gives one any amount of confidence. An hour later when Anton came in to put him to bed, Victor said between sips of his wine:

"If he doesn't do it, I'll take her myself," and fell asleep, smiling pleasantly.

There really was a committee meeting, and Staminov had left Elsa immediately after dining. Greffe found her in a somber little library, lighting it up with the loveliness of one of those gowns which she wore when there were none of the premier's friends present to criticize her extravagance.

"He's gone," Elsa said.

"It's you I came to see to-night," Greffe replied.

"I'm glad," she said, motioning him to a seat.

She wasn't glad. She was weak from surprise, uneasy because of the quiet purpose she saw in his face and could not understand.

"I'm going to take you out of this, Elsa."

She met it far more easily than if she had known what was coming. No protest, not a question; just a quick survey of what might be back of Greffe's coming.

"Because it's soiling you," he added. "You've done enough. Victor isn't worth it, the old order isn't worth it, nor the country, nor anything else. We were a lot of emotional fools when we let it trap us," Greffe went on. "We were afraid of the people. We wanted to save our wealth and position. Oh, yes, there was danger of bloodshed, revolution, and all that, but there always will be. Let it come!"

Greffe's voice was filled with bitterness and longing which Elsa had never heard in it before.

"You began this for an ideal," he said. "I let you go—for an ideal. But they were old-fashioned ideals. All ideals are."

"You don't mean that, Bernhard!"

"Didn't you love me less for giving you up?"

"No."

"That was foolish, Elsa. You should have hated me."

"I knew you understood."

"Understood!" he scoffed. "I thought I was playing a high-flung game, something fine and big. I thought, too, I was merely postponing my happiness with you. Your heart would be mine. He couldn't touch that. But he has!"

Elsa put out her hands protestingly, but Greffe would not wait.

"Do you think he needs your love? You went into this to hold him back from what he thought he was ordained to do. Your success has been his fail-

ure. How do you know he wasn't right? Perhaps it would be a good thing for them to topple over the old régime and take a fling at freedom for themselves. What's a king to hold them back?"

"Bernhard, wait—"

"And if you do give him your love, you'll either keep on hindering him, or you'll come to think his way and drop down to his level, with your peasant's clothes for a uniform and his sweaty followers for your friends. It isn't worth it, Elsa. You're going away with me, to America, where they don't need revolutions to find their freedom. My money's there. I've been selling out for months. We're going away!"

He swept her into his arms, as if he were about to take her bodily out of the house. She forced her shoulders back, looking up at him with earnest, burning eyes.

"There is something for me to do here!" she said. "He told me to-night that no one else could have changed his outlook. Isn't that worth while? Doesn't holding these fanatics in check mean anything to you?"

"No!"

"It does to me, and to every woman in the country."

"Do you love him, Elsa?"

She drew away, suddenly cold, trembling.

"Answer me."

Greffe took her face in his hands.

"Not as I've loved you," she told him simply.

"Then come away with me!"

"It would madden him," Elsa said. "It would start a fire that would burn us all up."

"Ah, but not you and me. Come!" he pleaded.

"I haven't finished what I have to do," she protested.

"You've done enough. It can't go on forever. I'm leaving now, to-night. Will you come?"

Silence that seemed unending. A

creaking floor board somewhere. A long, soft breath from Elsa. She pulled her fine body to full height, dropped her clenched hands.

"No!" she told him.

A moment later she heard the closing of the outer door. Then she sank weakly to a chair, hiding her face in her wet hands.

When she opened her eyes Staminov was standing above her.

"You should have gone," he said, calmly enough.

Elsa turned slowly in her chair and faced him. She was embarrassed by the very multiplicity of things she had to say in explanation. Back of it all was a feeling of relief that she had the chance to come at last to an honest understanding with her husband.

"Come, let's have the truth," he said. "Why didn't you go?"

Elsa saw that he was holding himself under tremendous restraint. She longed to say the thing that would loose his tension and bring him to her side, willing to hear the truth. She couldn't seem to find the word.

"Because you haven't finished what you have to do?" he asked, his lips parting in a thin-edged smile.

"No," said Elsa gently. "Because you need me more than he does."

"I need you?" he snarled. Then he used a word that jerked Elsa to her feet, her face flaming with anger and disgust. "Need you, you——"

"Be quiet!" she commanded.

His voice went higher.

"I wouldn't believe them when they told me long ago it was a trick. I said I'd back my judgment of you to the end. You seemed so fair and honest."

"I was! I am! If you'll only listen to me——"

"I've heard enough—from you and the others, and to-night I heard for myself. You're not going to hold me back from what I was meant to do, and what I know to be—right."

His breath caught in his throat. Elsa hurried to him.

"Please——" she begged.

He thrust her away.

"Perhaps this moderation you prate about," he went on, arresting her with his flaring eyes, "is the easiest way out, but I've finished with ease. We'll try force for a while, without any scheming guidance from Victor and his friends!"

Elsa stood quite still, meeting his scorn with the clear consciousness of her own sincerity. She seemed to dominate through the strength of purpose that was in her. Even now she would have forgiven, and tried to start afresh. She wanted only the opportunity to show him what was in her heart.

Her composure beat down the little restraint he had left. He caught her wrists, and out of his mouth came a torrent of abuse that petrified her. Once he stopped, relaxing his grip, and called her name in the old endearing way. His voice broke and a tremendous sob racked his body. Then he shook his head as if to get the thought out of his brain. Like some maddened Samson, he pulled his temple down over his head, glutting himself with destruction, content if he escaped its wreckage.

"Stop!" cried Elsa. "You are doing a greater injustice to yourself than to me. Good egotist that you are, don't you know that you've gone back to your swineherd beginnings when you say such things as these? I married the premier, not you. Be the premier again—if you can! He will understand what I have to say."

"So you have something to say?" he sneered.

"Just this," Elsa replied. She spoke with fine, free earnestness. "I meant good with all my heart to you and every one concerned. As time went on it was you I wanted to help more than any one else. I saw possibilities in you which you don't realize yourself."

"Possibilities!" he mocked.

"The mere fact that I'm forced to speak of my loyalty to you makes you unworthy of having it."

"Loyal!" he scoffed. "You——"

Again the unforgivable word.

Elsa swung on her heel. Unhurriedly she left the room. Looking back, she saw Staminov huddled in a chair with his hands pressed laxly to his heart. When she reached the outer door she turned and gazed curiously into the house. She had never liked the place. It was too patently a compromise, unfinished, shabby-genteel, a political stage setting. It was something of a tomb, too, the burial place of a still-born dream. She was through with this. Her work here was done.

She took a cab to Greffe's. He didn't ask for explanation, just opened the door of his little rosewood study, led her in, made her comfortable, and left her. Presently he came back with something in a glass. Her shivering went away. She wasn't cold any more.

Then she told him.

"Thank God it's over!" he said. "You can't change a mountain peasant."

"Is it really over?" Elsa wondered. "You see, I'm married to him."

"You're going away with me—to-night," said Greffe positively.

"Some day, yes," Elsa answered, "but not until I'm free. Let's have no regrets this time."

"You'll have to go away," Greffe told her emphatically, "whether you go with me or not."

The color came back to Elsa's face.

"I see," she said very faintly.

"Remember, he has reverted to his kind," said Greffe. "He'll never again be what you almost made of him. Tomorrow he will tell his world about you. He'll have to kill this rumor of weakness. He'll tell the assembly that another trick of the king has failed. They'll jeer at you when you go through the streets. The day is past when the peo-

ple laugh at your breaking speed laws, and enjoy your playing with a king. These peasants who are packing the town will take it up. Perhaps they'll stone the house you hide in. They might even put their hands on you. You'd better come."

"Confirm it all by running away!" said Elsa. "I couldn't."

"You've flayed his pride," insisted Greffe. "He won't stop humiliating you as long as he lives, and don't forget that his power is unlimited."

"He wouldn't dare while I'm his wife," insisted Elsa, thinking of the churchly veneration of the people for the fact of marriage.

"Do you think, then, that he will give you your freedom?" Greffe argued. "Not he! That would be too generous. And what grounds have you against him? What chance have you in these courts he has established? He has us in his grip, Elsa, just as he has this whole unhappy country."

There came a hurried knocking at the door. Greffe's orderly called him outside.

"Come in, Emil," said Greffe.

"An urgent case in the consulting room, sir," the man announced.

"Who is it?"

"I don't know, sir."

This hour Greffe wanted for himself.

"See if they won't go to some one else," he told the orderly. "I really can't help them to-night."

Very soon Emil came back.

"They want you, sir," he said. "The man is a patient of yours." Glancing at Madame Staminov, he said: "If you'll come outside I'll explain."

Greffe turned helplessly to Elsa.

"What can I do?" he sighed.

Elsa put her hands on his.

"Don't break your rule for me," she urged. "Go ahead. I'll be waiting for you, trying to think things out."

The orderly was standing in the corridor.

Greffe put his arm on Elsa's white shoulder, slowly, as if to assure her he had no wish to take something she would not freely grant. He lifted her face and put his lips to hers, at first gently, then with the ardor of long-deferred desire. Her body drooped against him. Her love went out to him like the white flame of a sacrament.

"What's the nature of the case, Emil?" Elsa heard him ask as he joined the orderly.

"Heart trouble, sir. Doctor Rathburn, whom they got first and who brought him here, calls it a leaking heart."

In the consulting room he found Doctor Rathburn bending over a figure which lay huddled in a chair, lax, inert. It was Staminov, deadly pale, eyes and lips tightly closed. Greffe grew suddenly weak, and caught at the edge of the table. Instinctively he stooped to listen for the heart action. There came the whispering, bubbling struggle of the premier's exhausted heart.

"You know the case," Rathburn said. "Valvular. There was nothing I could do."

Greffe nodded to Emil, and between them they carried the sprawling body into the operating room, where Greffe could better discover its halting needs. He snapped on the brilliant lights which turned the place into day. Multitudinous little lines of reflection from glass and metal converged on the table where Staminov was placed.

"Lock the door, Emil," said Greffe quickly.

Then he uncovered the premier's breast—no flesh, all skin and muscle, white as a woman's. He listened and thumped and tested. A leaking heart, which had beat itself almost to pieces with the force of its intensity, with strife and work and love. He tried

to forget the personality of his patient, to lose his own identity.

Only a few others had ever ventured to treat the human heart as Greffe had. Back in the midst of the fighting years he had startled his professional world with the fearless daring of his experimentation. Then there had been the stimulus of a mighty need: Men had to be made whole again in order to take up the fight afresh. Strain, exhaustion, shock, even little gaps in the heart itself, Greffe had healed with a miracle touch. Yet to-night he stood idly beside this helpless figure, unresponsive to its need, apparently indifferent to the claim it made on his proven ability to save.

There came a sudden knocking at the door. Elsa's voice was calling.

"Bernhard, let me in!"

Greffe seemed to be trying not to hear, as if he knew that the infusion of Elsa's personality would cloud the issue past all clear visioning.

Before him lay the one man in the country who could save it, could uphold its dignity among the nations, preserve its credit, and stave off revolution. All this he might do when he came to himself, and felt again the full force of his responsibility. Elsa's influence had stood for self-control, for fineness and bigness of outlook. It must have left its deep and cleansing impress.

"I thought you called me," Elsa cried, outside the door. "What is it?"

In the room, silence; the sickly odor of old anaesthetics; a million little rays of light converging on the gaunt figure of the premier. Greffe looked at him sharply in a new and personal way, as if he were really seeing him for the first time since he had come into the room.

He must have realized that this unconscious figure held the key to Elsa's happiness and freedom. Staminov could shame her, humiliate her to the dust. He could hold her to the finest bargain a woman ever made, and turn

it into scorn before the world. He could put a torch to their inflammable nation, and lay the blame on her. He could send her down to history in company with Delilah, Borgia, Pompadour.

It would be so easy to turn the thing into an operation. With quick, sure skill he could lay bare the premier's heart. Even the consulting physician at his side would admit the desirability of seeing for themselves. Then Greffe's strong hand could creep closer to this exhausted source of the premier's strength and weakness. His fingers would trail gently over and about it until they came upon the yielding spot. Then they would come slowly together, and in a moment—

"Let me in!" demanded Elsa, beating frantically on the door.

Greffe folded his arms and turned his back on Staminov.

"What do you think?" asked Rathburn.

"Nothing," Greffe said. "In fact, I'm afraid the case is hopeless."

From the corridor outside came a sobbing little moan, a muffled blow as if a soft body had thrown itself against the door.

"I love you, Bernhard!" Elsa sobbed.

Greffe nodded curtly to an orderly.

"Open the door," he said.

Elsa stumbled into the room. She was blinded for an instant by the lights. Then she sped to Greffe's side.

"I felt that you needed me," she breathed.

Her gaze moved on to the table. She shuddered, and hid her face against Greffe's shoulder. Elsa felt herself shrinking from the meaning of the thing as desperately as from the sight itself. With a shock that seemed almost to beat her mind back into orderliness, she recovered her own clear sight, her individual sense of values.

Staring, she whispered, "Can you save his life?"

Greffe looked down at her with cut-

ting directness. He seemed as impersonal, inexorable, as an ancient Fate.

"Shall I?" he demanded.

"Yes, yes!" said Elsa. "What difference does it make about me?"

"You're sure?" said Greffe.

"Yes!"

"Then I will," he declared.

A flicker of admiration crossed his face. He turned back to the table, stern and determined.

Elsa slipped out like a shadow, closing the door behind her. Back in the little study she held her finger continuously on a bell until a hurrying servant reached her.

"Order a motor for me at once," she said, "and when Doctor Greffe comes out of the operating room, tell him I have gone to see the king."

"I'm afraid you exaggerate, little Elsa," Victor laughed.

"I think not," Elsa answered, as calmly as she could.

She felt a wave of repugnance for Victor's callousness, and it made a dangerous inroad on her weakening self-control.

"One thing is sure," he said, "if Greffe promised to save the premier's life, he'll do it."

"There's no doubt of that," Elsa agreed proudly.

"Then," continued Victor, "we'll wait until Staminov recovers and let him ask this himself. I know how to handle his kind."

"You lose the point," persisted Elsa. "Staminov will be telling ugly tales long before he gets to his feet."

"Just what do you want me to do?" Victor asked impatiently.

"Send for the president of the assembly and hand him your offer to revoke half your grants for the benefit of the people."

"Give up half my income?" Victor scoffed. He left his seat, drew his purple robe closer, and strutted across

the room. "Not at all," he said. "They should double my grants on account of my tolerance of them."

Elsa took his measure fearlessly, just as she had once before.

"Are you going to be as great a fool as your father?" she inquired.

*Victor stopped in front of her, giving her the doubtful tribute of his approbation.

"I rather like your spirit," he said.

He poured the champagne Anton had brought in, and offered her a glass, with the smiling implication of what it meant to be served by a king.

"Victor"—Elsa spoke as if she were giving a sort of capitulation of things as she saw them—"I've paid a fair allegiance to your family. I think I've lived up to the traditions of my own. I've even given you my happiness. There comes an end to everything. I think you'll admit that, after to-night, we've reached it."

"Not necessarily, little Elsa," smiled the king.

Anton passed through the study. Victor gave him a quick and meaning glance, nodding imperceptibly toward the room beyond. Then he refilled Elsa's glass.

"But I'll go further, Victor," she continued. "I'll go now to the right people—to Levenson, the president of the assembly, and to Adamese—and take the initiative, acting as if I represented Staminov. They don't know yet what has happened between us. I'll make them come to you, and you can play the devoted ruler who loves his people, and pile up a generous credit of good will for yourself."

Victor eyed her suspiciously.

"Why do you say this?" he asked.

"Because Staminov wished it," Elsa replied.

"Staminov, eh?" Victor laughed.

"He knows better than any one else," the answer came, "how close to the edge you are."

"This proves it, Elsa!" said the king.

"What?" Elsa's patience and endurance were almost gone.

"That you care more for his cause to-day than you ever did for mine."

Elsa sprang to her feet. Before she reached the door Victor had blocked her way.

"Don't go, little Elsa!" he said.

"It's over, Victor," Elsa replied, with a heartfelt sigh of relief. "If you don't want to be helped——"

"But I do!" protested Victor. "And by you more than any one else in the world." He extended his arms, trying to touch her. "You can make me happy!" he said, and, in answer to Elsa's amazement, he added: "By loving me! I've wanted you all my life."

Elsa eluded him, got to the door—and found it locked.

"All my life, little Elsa!" he repeated. He caught her, drew her close. "No one but you and I will know how happy we have been."

Elsa sagged heavily in his arms. She felt the reality and the horror of life eluding her. She caught a glimpse of Greffe back in the brilliant operating room, pitting his skill against the demands of outraged stamina. She saw the wet-lipped smile on Victor's face—then nothingness.

Anton came quietly into the room.

Victor watched while Anton made her comfortable. His purple gown trailed half on the bed and half on the polished floor. At the first fluttering of her lids, he bent his head and held his parted lips above her.

Perhaps he had not heard the noise outside. Perhaps he did not care. Greffe had to drag Anton's body out of the way before he could reach the inner door. He shot the lock to pieces and battered down the panels just as Elsa came to herself, screamed, and sank under the kisses Victor lavished on her.

They found him later, still wrapped in the purple, unconscious from an inexplicable series of wounds on his royal person.

At the frontier Greffe handed over a brave, weak Elsa to his faithful orderly, Emil.

"I'll stay there just long enough," he said, "to pull the premier through. It may be weeks before I can come to you."

Elsa turned her head against the cushion. Her smile of contentment and

dependence wavered. Greffe answered the question she would not ask.

"Don't fear," he assured her, "I shan't fail."

"Thank you, Bernhard," she whispered.

"And when I join you at Lady Aynesworth's," he added, "I'll bring your freedom."

Elsa felt her heart quicken and grow glad at the determination in his voice and the confidence in his fine eyes.

"Staminov will owe me that," he said.

IN Assam, the northeast province of India, divorce is a simple matter—for the woman of means. For in that far-off country money plays a peculiarly important part in the lives of the weaker sex. If the rich wife grows tired of her husband she has no need for lawyers and the divorce courts—nor does she have to spend a weary six months in Reno, or its equivalent. She merely calls her husband in from the golf course—if they have golf courses in Assam—or wherever he may happen to be, and in the midst of a pleasant chat breaks the news of her decision gently and offers him a sum of money in return for her freedom.

Perhaps the sum seems small for giving up the comforts of home and in that case the husband registers a faint protest. But, very shortly, an amicable agreement is reached, and the man of the house departs at once—not forgetting to take with him the money, it must be said. Whereupon the wife promptly fills his place, without causing even mild comment in the smartest circles of Assam.

AT Deauville American women are outshining Parisiennes in the display of jewelry, to the astonishment of habitués of the fashionable Normandy pleasure resort. One woman, indeed, appeared at the Casino with eight bracelets on each wrist—on the right arm glittering diamonds studded the platinum bands, and on the left pearls; while around her neck were three ropes of pearls, from which hung a diamond pendant three quarters of an inch long. The glittering ensemble was completed with an array of brooches and rows of rings on the fingers of each hand.

JAZZ recently made its début in royal society with all the éclat that Princess Mary's sanction could give—and that is much. At her first entertainment as Viscountess Lascelles, a dinner dance to her parents, the King and Queen of England, and a brilliant gathering of notables, jazz was the feature of the evening. Lords and ladies alike swayed to its irresistible syncopations. And from now on—for such is precedent!—London society may dance to the jazziest of tunes—even in public.

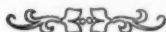
IN Africa, to-day, twenty thousand small shells will purchase a wife, but the question arises why pay so much for them when in most countries, now, they are to be had "for the asking."



The Kingmakers

By Burton E. Stevenson

Author of "Little Comrade,"
"A King in Babylon," etc.



CHAPTER XIX.

I HOPE to find love, some day!" Those words were in Selden's mind when he went to sleep that night and when he awoke next morning, and he lay for a long time thinking of the woman who had uttered them and of the story she had told him. To find love some day—there was a fit ambition for every human heart! But how often it was pushed aside by greed, by cynicism, by selfishness, by fear—by any number of cold and worldly things!

As it had been with himself. He could not but admit it. Perhaps in some thin and far-off fashion, he still hoped to find love some day; there had been moments haunted by a vision of himself seated cozily before a glowing hearth, and not alone; but somehow, as the years passed, that figure sitting there in slippered ease had grown older and older, gray-haired, even a little stiff in the joints from long campaigning. It had remained himself, indeed, but always himself thirty years hence.

For it is not only true that a rolling stone gathers no moss, but that it wishes to gather none; as time goes on, even grows to fear moss, or anything else that mars the hard smoothness which enables it to keep on rolling.

Selden had been rolling, now, for

many years. It was his first assignment to foreign work, to cover one of the Balkan wars, which had enabled him to cast loose his anchors, and he had never been seriously tempted to pick them up again. He had come to love rolling for its own sake. The wandering life of the special writer was congenial to his blood. It was of intense interest, for it enabled him to get past the fire lines at every holocaust, and it gave him a prestige, a sense of power, impossible to any sedentary job. The thought of being chained to a desk—of being chained even to a house—revolted him. He wanted always to be able to throw his things into a bag and take the road at a moment's notice, without the necessity of explanations to any one, or anything to hold him back.

For a long time he had told himself that it was his career he was jealous of, that nothing should touch that. It should be his task to interpret Europe to America and America to Europe; to labor night and day to bring the peoples of the old and the new worlds to a mutual comprehension and a common interest. But, of late, questionings had crept in, whispered doubts. Was he really accomplishing anything, was he really going ahead?

As he lay there that morning thinking it over, taking such inventory as he could, he saw that it was no longer

his career which drove him on, but merely habit; there was no longer any anchor he could cling to. He had reverted to type. For, in spite of the legend which women sedulously foster and even sometimes believe, man is not by nature a domestic animal. He has been fairly well tamed in the course of centuries, his spirit broken; but it is still necessary to keep him carefully hobbled and shackled by convention; and, in spite of everything, he sometimes manages to break loose, while even the meekest father of a family has his moments of longing and desperation. Selden had broken loose; now, at last, he was beginning to wonder whether freedom was worth the price.

As for his career, he had reached its apex. He could go on writing special articles, yes; he could go on casting a feeble light into the dark corners of the earth, dissecting the motives of public men, perhaps influencing public opinion a little—a very little; but he would never be any more powerful, any better known, than he was at that moment. Indeed, his influence and his fame must both diminish—imperceptibly for a while, perhaps, but none the less surely, for he could not hope that the future would by any possibility bring such opportunities as the past five years had brought. From this point onward his career could be only a descent.

Besides, he was himself growing weary of the game. The world had gone stale, had gone cold and skeptical. The fine enthusiasms, the wide sympathies, the common brotherhood of war days had waned and vanished. And his own enthusiasms had vanished, too. The doctrine of world effort, of world helpfulness, of world responsibility, which he had preached with such conviction, had fallen upon deaf or hostile ears. So he preached it no longer. He was worn out.

But what remained? Nothing that seemed to him worth while. Oh, he could still bring some food to Austria's starving children; he could still help or hinder the plans of a petty king; he could still take France's part in her struggle against isolation. But other men could do that just as well as he.

Perhaps it would be better worth while if he could make a woman happy—a woman whom no other man could make happy.

But how imbecile to suppose there was such a woman! And if there were, what had he to offer her? To drag her down with him on his long descent? No—that was a journey which he would make alone!

And at this point he threw off the covers, bounded out of bed, rang for breakfast, and plunged into his bath, which he made much colder than usual.

He needed bracing. He was getting soft.

After breakfast he settled resolutely to work on the last of his Austrian articles: a summary of the situation, which was not half so desperate as certain financiers had pictured it, for nothing could deprive Vienna of her position at the very center of the system along which flowed the trade of Central Europe. He kept doggedly at work until it was finished, and as he read it over he decided that it was the best of the lot. At least, he told himself, he had not forgotten how to write!

So it was to a composed and apparently normal Selden that the card of Mr. Charles Loring Davis was presently handed in, with that young gentleman close behind it. It seemed to Selden, as he greeted him, that his air was unusually subdued.

"You didn't wait for me last night,"

Davis said accusingly.

"No—did you finally break the bank?"

"Damn the bank! I want to talk to you seriously."

"All right; fire ahead. But sit down, won't you?"

Davis sat down and looked about the room for a moment, as though trying to find a place to begin.

"I had another talk with Mother this morning," he said finally.

"About Miss Fayard?"

"Yes. She got quite violent—said she had other plans for me—that she'd tie up all my money."

"I know," said Selden, smiling. "She wants you to marry the Princess Anna."

"Good heavens!" groaned Davis, his face turning pale with horror. "That—that—why, she's got a mustache, Selden! No, I won't do it! Look here, you've got to help me. I've done my part."

"Suppose you tell me about that first," Selden suggested.

"Oh, it was just as I thought," said Davis disgustedly. "Sis knew all about it. She flared up and told me to mind my own business. None of my family takes me seriously. Mother thinks this is just a boy and girl affair. It's not! I'm a man and I'm going to be treated as a man!"

"Wait a minute," said Selden. "You're getting ahead of your story. Tell me exactly what you said to your sister."

"I asked her if she knew that Danilo had a morganatic wife, because if she didn't know it, I thought it was my duty to tell her so."

"Yes; and what did she say?"

"She said of course she knew it; that that was all arranged, and that she wished I would attend to my own affairs, which certainly required my attention! I said I knew they did, and that if she wanted to be a real sister to me, she'd help me out—that I'd fallen in love with the sweetest girl on earth——"

"Go ahead," Selden encouraged, as Davis paused. "What did she say to that?"

"She said 'Piffle!' or something like that; and then I got mad, and told her that she couldn't fool me; that I had seen through her from the start—all that falderal about helping that little insignificant country out there—when her whole object was just to get even with Jeneski because he had thrown her over——"

"Wait a minute!" Selden interrupted, sitting bolt upright. "What do you mean by that? Do you mean that Jeneski and your sister were engaged to be married?"

"Oh, no; I was just laying it on a little heavy. But Jeneski and Father were always chewing the rag in the library of evenings, and Sis used to hang around and pretend she understood, and all she could talk about was Jeneski and the wonderful things he was going to do. She was certainly crazy about him. And then all at once she shut up, and after a while I learned that Jeneski had pulled out for Europe—so I just put two and two together. But I may be all wrong."

"What did your sister say when you made this—er—accusation?"

"Well," said Davis, with a grin, "the door slammed about then."

Selden sat for a moment looking at him. Could this be the key to Myra Davis' conduct? It fitted, certainly, or seemed to—and yet——

"So, since I couldn't get any sympathy at home, I came over here," Davis concluded.

"Well, you are not going to get much here," said Selden. "If you want to be treated like a man you've got to act like one, and a man doesn't drink too much champagne whenever he gets the chance, nor fool away his time at a roulette table, nor live off of money somebody else has earned. I think it is a good thing your money is tied up—"

maybe you will have to go to work. And I'll never ask your mother to turn it over to you—not till you have proved there is something in you. I *might* ask her to allow you something to live on till you can find a job, and I *might* point out to her that Miss Fayard is a darn sight too good for you, but not till you promise to brace up!"

Davis' face had darkened a little at the beginning of the tirade, but it was radiant before Selden finished.

"I'll do anything you say," he protested. "I know I've been a good deal of a rotter. Just give me a chance!"

"All right," said Selden. "That's exactly what I'm proposing to do."

"Then I'll go tell Cicette it's all settled!" Davis exclaimed joyfully, and jumped to his feet.

"How do you mean settled?" Selden demanded.

"I'm going to reform, and you're going to see the mater. That's the bargain, isn't it?"

"I am going to see your mother *after* you have reformed."

"Well, this is after," Davis pointed out, with a grin. "I reformed fully five minutes ago. Look here, old man," he went on more seriously, "don't think I'm not eternally grateful—I am."

"Shut up and get out!" Selden ordered. He was beginning really to like the boy.

"Come and have lunch with me," Davis suggested. "Maybe Madame Ghita will let me take Cicette, if you're along."

"Good heavens! I've an engagement for lunch!" Selden jerked out his watch. "I can just make it. Get out of here!"

"All right," said Davis. "But remember, my fate is in your hands!"

Half an hour later Selden and Scott sat down together at a little table on the terrace of Amiraute's, among the olive trees high above the sea, and attacked

a great dish of tiny sole, browned to a crisp, and unbelievably sweet and delicate, which Scott had ordered. And after that there were *turnados* garnished with slices of *foie gras* and deliciously tender. And finally there was a basket of fruit and nuts—figs from the oases of the Sahara, grapes from Málaga, oranges from Morocco, paper-shelled almonds and walnuts.

They had talked of desultory things, of old experiences, during the meal; but with the coffee and cigars Scott brought the talk abruptly back to the present.

"Anything new about the restoration?" he asked.

"No—except that I heard last night Jeneski is on his way here."

Scott whistled softly.

"What do you suppose he expects to do?"

"Heaven knows!"

"He will stir up some excitement, anyway," said Scott. "I met him once—he's an electric sort of fellow; you can almost see the sparks flying when he gets excited. And he will be excited, all right. But it seems to me the person to be pitied most in this affair isn't Jeneski or Miss Davis, but Danilo."

"Why do you pity him?"

"Well, if it were I," said Scott slowly, "I wouldn't give up a woman like Madame Ghita—not for any throne on earth. And neither would you," he added, looking at Selden.

"No, I wouldn't," Selden agreed, gazing out across the water; "not if she loved me."

"You mean she doesn't love the prince? Well, I suppose not. She is a very extraordinary woman. She got me to talk about you last night," he added in another tone. "She wanted to know all about you."

"Yes," said Selden, "she told me you had been blowing off. I could see what

you were trying to do. I appreciate it, old man."

Scott nodded curtly.

"It is finished, then—her affair with the prince?"

"Yes."

"That's fine!" said Scott, and nodded again. "What are you going to do, now you have finished your Balkan stuff?" he asked, after a moment.

"I don't know. I was thinking about it this morning. The fact is, Scott, I have lost my edge. I'm beginning to go downhill."

"Nonsense!" Scott protested sharply. "Downhill! You make me tired!" But there was a certain anxiety in his eyes as he looked at Selden, and puffed his cigar reflectively for a moment. "I don't know but what you are right, old man, in a certain sense," he said at last. "As a special correspondent, you have reached the summit; you can't go any higher because there is no place higher to go to. But that doesn't mean you are going to give up fighting for the things you believe in. You have a following—I don't think you realize how large it is; and right now is the time for you to strike out for something bigger."

"Such as what?" asked Selden skeptically.

"I haven't thought it out, but what I see at this moment is a great liberal weekly, with you as editor in chief and the strongest kind of staff—the kind you could get together better than any other man I know. I have thought for a long time that the time is ripe for the liberal weekly, dealing in a large way with world affairs and social progress and politics. I know there are already three or four, but they are all handicapped in one way or another. Now is the time for the real thing. And you are the man to start it."

Selden laughed a little bitterly.

"I didn't know you were such a dreamer, Scott!" he said.

"It isn't a dream."

"Yes, it is. Apart from all question of myself, where is the money to come from? You don't imagine it would be self-supporting?"

"Of course not—not for a long time. It must have the right sort of financial backing—strong enough to make it independent in every way."

"But how can a liberal paper hope to get financial backing? How can any paper get financial backing without mortgaging its opinions? It can't be done!"

"Yes, it can," said Scott. "At least I believe it can. There must be at least one disinterested millionaire in the world! I'll take a look for him. Meanwhile, there is another thing you want to do; get married—to the right woman."

"I suppose you've already got her picked out for me," remarked Selden, with irony.

"As it happens, I have," said Scott coolly. "I was talking to her last night."

Selden stared at him, all his blood in his face.

"Do you mean Madame Ghita?" he asked.

Scott nodded curtly.

"Of course I do."

"But look here," Selden stammered, "you're joking, of course! Do you suppose I'd have the nerve? I'm not good enough for her—I'm not big enough!"

"Oh, you're a fool!" exclaimed Scott impatiently. "She could make any man big—if she loved him."

"Ah, yes," agreed Selden hoarsely, "if she loved him! She couldn't love me!"

"I don't know," retorted Scott. "Women do strange things sometimes. Why not ask her?"

And he threw away his cigar and called for the bill.

CHAPTER XX.

It was not merely, or even principally, to arrange the articles of settlement that Baron Lappo had gone so hastily to Paris. The terms of the articles had already been agreed upon, after exhaustive debates with Mrs. Davis' solicitor; tentative drafts had been exchanged, and the final one was even then in the baron's hands, with but a minor detail or two needing correction—trivial matters, easily arranged by post.

But the royal exchequer was low—empty, as a matter of fact; and the need of replenishment was so urgent that the baron had excused himself a few minutes after Selden's departure from the betrothal dinner, changed hurriedly into traveling clothes while his valet packed his bag, and had managed to catch the twelve-twenty Paris express.

He had reached Paris late on the following morning, had driven straight to the rooms of a private banker in rue Lafitte, and had at once, as was his habit, placed all his cards on the table. These cards had been examined carefully by a fat gentleman with a black, curly beard, and had proved so satisfactory that the baron was able to get away in time to take Mrs. Davis' solicitor to lunch, where the final details of the settlement were agreed upon and arrangements made to have the official copies prepared at once.

He had then spent an hour at the Quai d'Orsay, and another half hour at the British embassy in rue du Faubourg St. Honoré; had gone back to rue Lafitte for a final talk with his banker, and then to the offices of the solicitor in the Avenue de l'Opéra, where the official copies of the agreement were awaiting him, and had arrived at the Gare de Lyon, very tired, but triumphant, in time to catch the eight-twenty train for Marseilles.

It was about the middle of the next afternoon that he stepped out again upon the platform at Nice, entered the car which was awaiting him, and was whirled away to the Villa Gloria, where he found the king recovering from the heart attack of the previous day.

It had been a severe one, brought on, as always, by overeating. The king was a *gourmet*, not to say a glutton, with not always the strength to resist temptation. It was one of Baron Lappo's duties to supply this strength. In his absence the task usually devolved upon the Princess Anna; but she had been ill the day before, and the chef had been so ill-advised as to prepare a pilau of which the king was very fond, with the consequence that for a time he had been very ill indeed.

The baron uttered no reproaches, but there was that in his look which would have made the king blush, if he had not already been so rubicund.

"Do not be cross with me, my old friend," he said. "It is the only pleasure I have left."

"But at this moment," the baron pointed out, "your majesty should be very careful. It would be most unfortunate if the impression got about that you are subject to such attacks."

"I am not dead yet," said the king, "though I confess that for a time I was uncertain about it. You have the papers?"

"They are here"—the baron spread them out—"everything is as we wished."

"What are the exact figures?" asked the king.

"The estate, when all the debts had been settled and the taxes paid, amounted to seventy-five million. Of this, a third was left to the daughter, a third to the son, and a third to the wife; the wife's share to be held in trust, after her death, for any grandchildren. The son's share is also in trust; but the daughter's is to be paid

over to her upon her marriage, but must remain her property, not her husband's."

"We cannot object to that," said the king. "She will have, then, how much?"

"About twenty-five million dollars, sire."

"That is how much in the currency of our country?"

"At present rates, nearly three billion dollars."

"Ah," said the king thoughtfully, "what can not be done with such a sum! Half of it will suffice!"

"That is also my opinion," said the baron.

"And the remainder can be put aside as a foundation for our house. If we could get the boy also——"

"His money will never be really his—it is held in trust for his children."

"Magnificent!" said the king. "It would make our house the richest in Europe. Yes, we must arrange it. But meanwhile, my good Lappo, as you know, we have nothing. Did you see Hirsch?"

"Yes, sire; and he is willing to make a loan—three hundred thousand francs, to be repaid one month after the marriage. The terms," added the baron, "are rather stiff."

"No matter," said the king, who was used to stiff terms. "When can we get the money?"

"I have arranged for the notary and an official of Hirsch's bank to come this evening, prepared to pay it over after your majesty and Danilo have signed the necessary papers. Danilo must not fail to be present."

"Good!" said the king. "I will attend to that. This does more to cure me than all the doctors," he added. "There is no illness so annoying as lack of money! And the settlement—that also must be signed without delay."

"I had thought of to-morrow morning," said the baron.

"Very well," agreed the king. "You will make the arrangements."

"I have also to report," said the baron, "an attitude of benevolent neutrality on the part of the French and British governments. They have no disposition to interfere, so long as there is no bloodshed. Italy, of course, we can count on. Our success, therefore, seems assured, unless the prince——"

"Don't worry about Danilo," said the king. "He will do as I tell him; he knows his duty. You have provided for his wife?"

"I have caused an offer to be made her."

"By whom?"

"By the Countess Rémond."

"Ah, yes," said the king reflectively. "You think you can trust her?"

"Absolutely, sire. She has reasons to be grateful to me—and to hate Jen-eski."

"You are right not to count too much upon gratitude," said the king, "but hate—yes, that is better. She is a clever woman. We must not forget her."

The baron retired to his cabinet to look through his mail, and there he found the report from the countess of the interview with Madame Ghita, and of her acceptance of the baron's terms. But it contained no reference to the receipt of the telegram from Goritz heralding Jen-eski's arrival!

The baron read the report attentively, especially a long postscript, and nodded approval once or twice. Then he ordered his car, made a careful toilet, and presently sallied forth to call upon Mrs. Davis in her villa at Cimiez; and after a most satisfactory conversation with her directed his chauffeur to proceed by the coast road to Monte Carlo.

Selden had declined Scott's proffer of a lift back to his hotel.

"No, I'll walk," he said. "It will do me good."

The moment had come when he must arrange his future; when he must decide what he was going to do. He felt that he must be alone, that he could not meet any of the actors in the drama—certainly not Madame Ghita—until that decision had been reached. And he was the prey of many and violent emotions, for he began to perceive that the decision might not rest wholly in his hands. Scott was a fool, of course, in thinking there was a chance for him; but at least he must make up his mind whether he should try to win her or whether he should flee.

It was evident that his only sure safety lay in flight; he could no longer trust himself; and he told himself again and again that he was a fool to hesitate. Yet to flee from such a woman—wasn't that more foolish still? The thought of life with her turned him a little giddy.

But how could he support her? There was no admiring public ready to pay for the privilege of dining with a newspaper man! Even if he had been willing to accept life on such terms. And she would have to renounce the king's bounty, for it was equally impossible for him to live on money acquired as that would be. But what right had he to ask her to do that? No, he couldn't do it! He must go away!

And then the memory of her eyes, of her voice, rent him anew. He was in love! He! In love! What a pitiable object he had become!

When he finally got back to his room he hauled out his bag and began to pack—slowly, with long periods of abstraction.

It was thus the baron found him. It needed but a glance at Selden's tortured face to tell that astute old student of human nature what was amiss.

"Yes, I am back, you see," he said, as he took the proffered chair. "Everything is arranged, and I have come to ask you to do Madame Davis and my-

self one more favor. I have no shame—I am always asking!"

"What is the favor?"

"The articles of settlement are to be signed to-morrow morning. Mrs. Davis would consider it a very great favor, and so should I, if you would sign as a witness in her behalf."

Selden hesitated.

"There is nothing in the terms of the settlement to which you could object," went on the baron. "The entire fortune of Miss Davis remains absolutely in her hands. The prince gets nothing, except a small annuity. We preferred it so. We hope, of course, that she will choose to use a portion of her fortune to rehabilitate our country—which will be her country also—but the bulk of it will be conserved for the benefit of her children."

Still Selden hesitated.

"Come," said the baron, "tell me frankly what is in your thought."

"I am wondering," said Selden, "whether Miss Davis will be happy. It is evident that she is not in love."

"Not, at least, with the prince," supplemented the baron.

"What do you mean?"

"I may be wrong," said the baron, "because I do not understand your women; but I have observed Miss Davis as carefully as I could—naturally, since I had need to do so!—and I have become more and more convinced that somewhere in her life there has been an unhappy love affair, from which she has never quite recovered. That happens, does it not, even to American girls?"

"Yes, of course," said Selden.

"I admit it does not seem probable, but it is the only explanation I can find of a thing which has appeared to me very strange. For the only question she has asked herself, apparently, about this marriage is not whether she would be happy, but whether she would be useful."

"Yes," said Selden again, "she asked me just that."

"Not for a moment, so far as I could see, has she thought of love. That, I confess, seemed to me unnatural; though perhaps American girls do not think of love"—the baron shrugged his shoulders helplessly—"or perhaps they are ashamed of it. I do not know. As for happiness—are your American marriages always happy?"

"No, not always," Selden admitted with a smile.

"I have never seen one that appeared so," said the baron, "not as a French marriage is very often happy. To me, American husbands and wives seem merely bored with each other. Why should two people stay together when they would be happier apart?"

"You see only the worst ones over here; and a lot of people are held together by habit, by fear of ridicule or loss of position. We are cowards in that respect."

"Yes; we are not like that. For one thing, our women try to keep themselves interesting to their men, and they are not ashamed of love. They do not consider a husband merely a source of funds—a bank. Very often they even manage his affairs for him, and better than he could. The attitude of the husband, too, is different. With you, women are an ornament; with us, they are a passion."

"Too much so, perhaps," commented Selden.

"It may be; yes, no doubt our men are less faithful than yours, but they are also less cruel. They do not condemn a woman because she has been in love with more than one man. For, after all, Monsieur Selden," went on the baron, lighting a cigarette, "it is a much greater compliment to a man—a much more difficult thing to achieve—to be a woman's last lover than it is to be her first one. To be a woman's first lover—that is nothing; she is curious,

she wishes to know what love is, she has not perfected her defense. A man need only to be a little good-looking and not too stupid. But to be her last lover, that is different. To emerge victorious from the comparisons that she makes, to impress her as no one else has done, to awaken something in her that no one else has been able to awaken, to cause her to say to herself, 'I will seek no further—I am content!'—to accomplish that, a man must be very clever, very intelligent. It is a triumph. There is no higher compliment."

"Perhaps it is a compliment Miss Davis will pay the prince," suggested Selden, with a smile.

"I was not thinking of Miss Davis," said the baron, "but that is possible. The prince is not without brains. At least, I trust she will be happy as well as useful. I give you my word, as a man of honor, that I shall do everything in my power to make her so."

"I am sure of it," said Selden, "and I shall be glad to be present to-morrow morning as Mrs. Davis' witness."

"Thank you," said the baron. "At eleven."

He made a little motion as if to rise, then, glancing again at Selden's face, lighted another cigarette, and settled back in his chair.

"Tell me about yourself," he said. "What has been going on here?"

"Nothing has been going on. I have been doing a little work—and annoying myself a great deal."

"Annoying yourself? About what, if I may ask?"

"About my future."

"Ah!" said the baron. "Does it not please you—your future?"

"As a matter of fact," answered Selden, with a crooked grin, "I have suddenly discovered that my future is behind me."

The baron took a long puff of his cigarette and exhaled the smoke slowly.

"Your Americanisms sometimes puzzle me," he said. "What you mean, I suppose, is that you do not at this moment see ahead of you any work which seems as important as that which you have already done."

"Not at this moment, or any moment. Worse still, I am beginning to despair of human nature; I——"

"But you are wrong—very wrong!" broke in the baron. "Here am I, at least twice your age, my whole life spent in the most cynical of all professions, and my admiration for human nature grows stronger and stronger, day by day. I listen to the pessimists with a smile—the prophets of evil do not frighten me. I grant all their contentions: that man is naturally evil, that he has used such glimmering light of reason as he may possess only to become more bestial than the beasts, that five thousand years of civilization have culminated in five years of atrocity, fiendishness and insanity; yes, but in the midst of it all, in the very worst of it, there were flashes of splendor, flashes of kindness and courage and self-sacrifice. There is something of that in all of us, and that is the miracle. It should not astonish us that men are full of ignorance and vice, but that they are capable of the heroisms they sometimes attain. You have been looking at the wrong side of the shield, my friend."

"Perhaps I have," agreed Selden, in a low voice.

"Well, turn it over," said the baron. He paused a moment, evidently in doubt whether to go on. "I am an old man," he continued at last, "and I have seen a great deal of life; also, I esteem you very highly—so you will permit me to say something which in another might seem an impertinence. It is this: do not fear to seize happiness when it comes your way; do not hesitate, or draw back, or run away. It is a rare thing, happiness—a very rare

and fleeting thing; even at best, we can only hope to taste it briefly, now and then. How silly, how cowardly, to permit a single moment of it to escape! That," he added, "is all that I have learned in the sixty years that I have been on earth. But many men do not learn even that—not until it is too late!"

He sat for a moment longer looking at Selden with his wise old eyes; then he rose abruptly.

"Good-by, my friend," he said, "till to-morrow—at eleven."

CHAPTER XXI.

It was a decidedly nervous and shaken Selden who dressed for dinner that evening. For the first time in his life he had committed what is for a journalist the unpardonable sin—he had permitted his feelings to become involved in an affair which he had set himself to watch from the outside. He had ceased to be an observer and had become a participant.

Yet permitted was scarcely the word, for he seemed to have had no volition in the matter. He had been drawn in against his will. But, he told himself grimly, it was because his struggles to escape had been half-hearted. He might have saved himself had he heeded the first signals of danger. It was his cursed inability to make up his mind that had brought him to his present pass. He had dabbled with temptation, and now it was too late; the whirlpool had him!

No, that was not true either. Let him at least be man enough to be candid with himself; he could escape, even now, if he really wanted to. He had only to finish packing his bag, go to the station, get aboard the first train, and permit it to carry him away. But that was such a cowardly thing to do.

"Oh, own up, you idiot!" he groaned between his teeth. "It's not because

it is cowardly you don't do it! Own up! It's because you don't want to escape!"

And, staring at himself in the glass, he realized that this was the truth—he had got down to it at last. He didn't want to escape. It was finished. He might still struggle a little in an instinctive sort of way, but unless some power outside himself seized him and threw him clear—

Yes, and in that event he had the horrid consciousness that he would fight with all his strength against that power!

"What is it I am afraid of?" he asked himself. "The baron is right. A man is a fool not to seize happiness when it comes his way!"

If he could only have happiness without capitulation! If he could have love fighting at his side for some great ideal! That were to be blessed indeed! If it were only possible to serve at the same time the flesh and the spirit! But if love should drag him down—well, even then, he would have love!

Why had the baron talked to him like that? Was it, perhaps, that he had some inkling? And old Scott, too—

The sharp ringing of his telephone bell startled him out of his thoughts.

"This is Davis," said the voice at the other end. "What have you planned for to-night?"

"Nothing in particular," Selden answered. The only thing he had definitely planned was to go to the Club in the hope of finding Madame Ghita there.

"Then come up and have dinner with us."

"Who is 'us'?"

"Madame Ghita, Miss Fayard and myself. We are having a dinner to celebrate a very special event—one in which you are especially interested."

"Where is the prince?" asked Selden.

"He can't come until later. He just telephoned us not to wait for him—he

has to sign some papers of some sort. Three would be deadly, and madame suggested that I ask you."

Selden's heart was beating like a drum. It was the Rubicon.

"Where is the dinner?" he asked in a voice muffled by emotion.

"In madame's apartment, here in the hotel, third floor. Will you come?"

"Please come, Monsieur Selden!" said madame's voice softly.

It was all over—he took the plunge.

"Of course I will come," he said.

"Thank madame for me."

"Oh, you can thank her yourself," said Davis, with a chuckle. "We'll give you fifteen minutes."

"All right," Selden agreed, and placed the receiver back on its rack.

He gave a last critical look at himself, retied his tie, then caught up coat and hat, descended to the lobby, and hurried out to the florist's at the corner, where he bought two incredibly expensive bunches of roses. He paid for them with a thrill of satisfaction—for the first time in his life he was being foolish; he had cut loose from the moorings of common sense; he had let himself go!

Flowers in hand, he hurried back to the hotel and presented himself at the door of Madame Ghita's apartment.

He was entirely cool now, quite himself, and was able to present the flowers to the ladies and exchange the usual greetings without a tremor. Only he suspected an uncanny discernment in the long look Madame Ghita gave him as she thanked him for the roses.

She was looking incredibly lovely in a clinging gown of dark, wine-colored velvet, without ornamentation, and, as she moved away from him to place the roses in a vase and order dinner to be served, he drank in again the exquisite grace of her figure, the queenly poise of her head, the regal way in which she moved. And a sudden shaft of fear

struck through him. How could he hope to win a woman like that?

She came back in a moment, and motioned them to the table.

"Let us sit down," she said. "You here at my left, Monsieur Selden; you at my right, Monsieur Davis; you there, Cicette."

As they took their seats Selden saw that she had placed one of his roses in her bosom, and his hands began to tremble a little, in spite of his efforts to control them. He was grateful that Davis was babbling away excitedly.

"It was great of you to come, old man," he said, "perfectly gorgeous. Imagine a dinner with an empty place!"

Selden chilled at the words. Yes, it was true; he was there in another man's place; this apartment was another man's apartment.

He had an impulse to rise, to run away. It was not at table only he was seeking to take another man's place. The thought was almost more than he could bear.

"I had a premonition the place would be empty unless Monsieur Selden consented to come," said Madame Ghita softly.

Davis stared at her.

"But you were doubtful if he would," he objected.

"I knew that Monsieur Selden had many engagements," said madame, her color mounting a little. "Nevertheless, I permitted myself to hope."

Selden felt his heart revive. So the place was really his!

"You are very good to me, madame," he murmured, and then he caught Cicette's eyes on him, very round and shining. Well, let the whole world see; he did not care!

But Davis was too engrossed in his own affairs to notice anything.

"I told you, you know," he rattled on, "that this was a very special occasion. Damn it, I can't keep it any longer!" he added, as Cicette made a

motion to silence him, and he caught her hand and held it. "Waiter, fill the glasses! Selden, old man, I want you to drink to the health of the sweetest girl in the world—the future Madame Davis!" He raised Cicette's hand to his lips with more grace than Selden imagined he possessed.

"With all my heart!" cried Shelden, deeply moved. "I congratulate you, Davis; and you also, mademoiselle."

"Thank you," said Davis, and held out his hand across the board. "You said that like you meant it!"

"I do mean it. She is charming. She will make you a good wife. Take care that you make her a good husband."

At that, the bride-to-be gave him her hand to kiss.

"You, also, are very charming," she said in rapid French, "and I hope that some day it will be my turn to wish you good fortune." She glanced at Madame Ghita's face, and suddenly sprang to her feet and ran around the table and kissed her. "You are a darling!" she whispered in her ear. "A big, big darling, the dearest in the world!"

Madame held her close for a moment, and then sent her back to her seat.

"You must be sensible," she said.

"Oh, yes, I shall be sensible, do not fear," Miss Fayard assured her. "And I shall try to be, as you say, monsieur, a good wife. But he has need of control, has he not? A strong hand, *hein?*"

"Truly," agreed Selden. "A very strong hand! Do not hesitate to apply it, mademoiselle, right from the beginning!"

"See here," protested Davis, "don't talk so fast. Or speak English."

"I also learn ze Fingleesh," laughed Miss Fayard. "Oh, already. I spik heem verree well. But ees eet not ridicule, *ce nom-là*—Madame Davees?"

"Well, it is going to be yours," said

Davis grimly, "so you'll have to make the best of it. You understand," he went on to Selden, "this is between ourselves as yet. We've got to square things with the *mater* before it's announced."

"She will never consent, never!" cried Miss Fayard, lapsing into her native tongue.

"Oh, yes, she will," said Davis. "Old Selden has promised to help me. And if she doesn't, it won't make any difference. I'm of age. We shan't starve."

Selden looked at him with interest; already he detected in him a new spirit. He was more of a man.

"Yes, I will help," he said. "But whether your mother consents or not, you were right not to wait. There is a very great English poet," he went on to Madame Ghita, "named Robert Browning—perhaps you have heard of him—and he was a great poet because he was, first of all, a great philosopher. One of his poems is about a man who loved the wife of another man, and she also loved him, and they decided to go away together and be happy. But first one thing intervened, and then another; the days slipped by, and the months and the years. Before they knew it age was upon them, their blood grew cold—it was too late."

"Yes—and then?" asked Madame Ghita, who had been listening with shining eyes.

"Browning points out that their indecision, their cowardice, was far worse, far more damning, than if they had seized their happiness, though that was a crime, and he adds that a man should contend to the uttermost for his life's set prize, be it what it will—vice or virtue—for the worst sin of all is 'the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin.'"

"And he is right," said madame in a low voice.

"Of course he is right. That is why I tell Davis he is wise to seize 'his life's

set prize' while it is within reach. Whether his mother consents or not—that does not matter."

"Is it true, then, monsieur," asked the girl, who had been listening to all this with great eyes, "that in America one can marry without the consent of the parents?"

"But yes," Selden assured her. "With us it makes no difference whether or not the parents consent. Many times, they do not even know about it until after their children are married."

"It is scarcely to be believed!"

"America, mademoiselle," said Selden, whose spirit had suddenly lifted its wings within him, "is the land of youth, for youth, about youth. We are young; we permit our young people to tyrannize over us; our literature, our theater, are concerned principally with their love affairs, which are always innocent and always end in a happy marriage. And in that marriage it is always the woman who dominates. The man is tolerated, because to a marriage a man is necessary; but he has only one function—to provide an ornate pedestal upon which the woman may stand; and but one duty—to worship her all his life. He has promised to do so, and he must keep that promise, no matter how silly and useless he may find her to be. That is the convention, the proper thing, to which all good Americans subscribe."

"I know! I know!" cried Cicette. "I have seen them, the man following his wife like a footman—a beast of burden."

"Yes," said Selden, laughing. "It is only in America the woman walks in front."

"But there is one thing I cannot understand," went on Cicette, "that there are so many American women who leave their husbands at home when they come to Europe."

"Why not?" Selden demanded.

"What need has the husband of culture? His function is to earn the living."

"But is it not dangerous? Those deserted husbands—do they not find some one——"

"Some of them do, but most of them just keep on toiling away. The American husband is incredibly docile and incredibly faithful."

"So I do well to marry an American?"

"Undoubtedly!"

"And he does well to marry a Frenchwoman," said Madame Ghita, "for, in spite of her gay manner, in spite of her apparent thoughtlessness, she is good and very serious at bottom. She will give herself to her husband utterly, without reservation; she will live only for his career; she will be ceaselessly vigilant for his interests; if he is ill, she will nurse him; if he has bad fortune, she will console him; she will herself prepare the dishes he likes to eat, warm the bed for him, black his boots, gladly, if need be."

"Yes," agreed Selden, "men are more precious over here, more cherished. You have always had more women than men. With us it has been the other way—it is the women who are at a premium!"

"It is deeper than that!" protested madame. "It is in the heart."

"We, also, have women like that," said Selden quietly. "women who would do anything for the men they love. You do not see them over here—not often; they are too busy bringing up their children. They do not figure in the papers, for their life is spent in the home. Only they demand more of a man than you do. They do not realize what half-tamed creatures men are, and sometimes they demand too much. I think you understand men better."

"Ah, yes!" laughed Miss Fayard, shaking her finger at Davis. "We understand them! Never believe that

I shall not understand you! When you lie to me, I shall know it, but you will never suspect that I know—not until long, long afterward. And then you will be very, very much ashamed!"

"All right," said Davis, gazing at her in rapt adoration. "I am not afraid! Isn't she a peach?" he added to Selden.

"Exquisite!" Selden agreed, suddenly sober. "Be good to her, old man!"

"You don't need to tell me that!" said Davis quickly.

"Perhaps not. What are you going to do after you are married?"

"We're going to take a trip around the world."

"Yes—and after that?"

"Oh, settle down somewhere, I guess, and raise a family."

"That will keep your wife busy, but not you. What are *you* going to do?"

"He will be a great politician!" cried Cicette.

Davis groaned.

"Not in America!"

"He is right," said Selden, with a smile. "With us it is not the same thing. Well, you must choose a career for him, mademoiselle, after you know him better; something to keep him busy part of the time, so that he won't be annoying you all day long. I wish I had some one to choose a career for me!" he added.

Madame Ghita looked at him quickly, struck by something in his voice.

"You have your career," she said; "a very wonderful one!"

"Do you think so?"

"But of course! Every one thinks so!" She was looking at him searchingly now, deeply concerned at what she saw in his face. "Do you mean it does not satisfy you?"

"It seems rather empty at times," he confessed.

"Empty? But how is that possible? Oh, you are jesting!"

"I wish——"

A sudden commotion at the outer

door interrupted him—the sound of a raised voice; and then the curtains were swept aside and Danilo burst into the room.

"I have come for you, Renée!" he cried, with a wild gesture. "Hasten! I take you away to-night!"

CHAPTER XXII.

There was a moment's stupefied silence while the prince looked triumphantly at each of them in turn, his gaze lingering upon Selden an instant longer than upon the others, as though asking what he did there. His eyes were shining strangely, and there was something defiant in his face, something reckless in his air, as of a man who had started forth upon some desperate venture and burned his boats behind him.

"Come!" he said again, as Madame Ghita made no move.

"But I do not understand!" she protested.

"I have had enough of it!" said the prince, and he filled himself a glass of champagne and gulped it down. "I am treated as of no importance, as just a pawn in a game which does not interest me. I am told to do this, not to do that; to marry a woman for whom I care nothing—that would not be so bad; it was what I expected; to that I have agreed. But to leave the woman I love—no, to that I did not agree, and when they tell me I must do it, I say 'No, it is not possible; you are asking too much!' I rebel—yes, I thrust it all aside, and I come to take you away!"

Madame Ghita's face was ghastly.

"But the dynasty—your grandfather! It will kill him," she said, in a voice hoarse with emotion.

"I cannot help it. That is no reason why I should be miserable all my life."

"And your country?"

"Jeneski will rule it better than I. Come! What is it?" he demanded, seeing that she still stared at him as

though fascinated, and made no move. "What is it you fear? That I have no money? See here"—he plunged his hand into his pocket and brought forth a bulky purse—"I have three hundred thousand francs—enough for two years!"

"Where did you get it?" she asked.

"No matter where I got it!" he cried, and a little spasm crossed his face, distorting it for an instant. "I have it—that is enough. Come!"

"No, no!" she protested. "No, no! You cannot do this!"

"Look here," put in Davis, who had caught the drift of things, "what about my sister?"

"Your sister will be far happier if she does not marry me," said the prince.

"I am not in the least the man for her."

"Still," protested Davis, "to be deserted like this——"

"She may make any explanation she pleases: that it was she who broke off the match, and I will confirm it. I have no wish to injure your sister, monsieur, and she will not be injured."

"Just the same," Davis muttered, "it's pretty tough that it should happen twice!"

"If monsieur wishes any other satisfaction," said the prince haughtily, "I am at his service." Then he swung back to Madame Ghita. "*Alors*, Renée!"

The blood was coming back into her face and she was regaining her self-control.

"Sit down, Danilo," she said, "and do not be so ridiculous. One cannot go away like that. What about my packing?"

"Your maid can do it."

"And you—you are going away like that, with just the clothes you have on?"

"My man will send my things after me."

"No," she said. "You are too silly. You must keep your word to this girl."

"But you told me to-day that when I marry her everything is over between us."

"Yes; everything is over between us now, Danilo," she said gently.

His face flushed a fiery red and he strode toward her threateningly.

"Then it is not because of this marriage that you leave me—it is because you no longer love me!"

She made no answer, only looked at him, smiling slightly, a bright spot of color in either cheek.

"You love some one else!" he shouted. "Who is it?" His eyes roved for an instant back to Selden's face.

"Ah, Danilo," she said sadly, "do not spoil everything at the end in this way. Do not make me regret that I have known you!"

"Then it is true! Who is it?"

"Monsieur," said Madame Ghita coldly, "I am not to be shouted at, even by you. You are not yourself to-night. If you are going to behave in this manner, I must ask you to withdraw."

For an instant Selden, tense and ready to spring, thought the prince was going to strike her.

"Withdraw!" he repeated, staring at her and then about the apartment, as though doubting his own senses. "You tell me to withdraw!"

And then he burst into a roar of laughter, pulled up a chair, and sat down.

"Come," he said, lighting a cigarette with trembling hand, "it is over. I was a fool, *hein?* What a joke! Give me some wine!"

Davis, much relieved, filled his glass.

"Do you often have these fits?" he asked.

"Not often, monsieur," said the prince dryly, sipping his wine. "Madame can testify that I am usually most equable. But sometimes—yes, sometimes I think I am a little mad!" He rubbed his hand across his forehead. "Yet we are all of us a little mad, are

we not, Monsieur Selden?" he asked, looking at Selden with a sardonic smile.

"Some more than others," Selden answered.

"Ah, you mean me!" said the prince. "Yes, it is so—I more than others. Sometimes I am quite, quite mad. To-night, *par exemple*, I thought I had discovered a way of escape from all the things that worried me. That was mad, yes? Because one can never escape!"

"You are right," Selden agreed. "One can never escape—not by running away."

"I see what you mean"—the prince nodded—"to overcome one's troubles, one must not run away; one must face them, yes? Besides, it is cowardly to run away, and a gentleman must not be a coward. You see I can be a *philosophe* at times—I am at this moment, very *philosophique*. I remain; I face my troubles. Monsieur Davis, you will yet have *mè* for a *beau-frère*! Madame, I ask your pardon!"

"It is granted," she said. "I am happy to see you reasonable again."

"Yes, I am reasonable," he agreed. "Another glass!"

Madame, who had been watching him with evident anxiety, shook her head, but Davis did not see the gesture and filled the glass.

"Wait," said Davis, and refilled all the glasses. "You remember I told you that I had a surprise for you to-night?"

"Ah, yes," smiled Danilo. "What is it?"

"It is that I am going to marry Miss Fayard," answered Davis, unconsciously falling into his idiom. "This is my betrothal dinner."

"Is it true?" cried the prince, and sprang to his feet. "Monsieur—madame—let us drink to the happy pair—to their health, to their happiness, to everything that is good!" He drained his glass, then walked around the table and took the girl's hand. "Mademoiselle," he said, "I have always admired

you, for you are good. I pray you to accept this little gift for good luck."

He drew a ring from his finger and slipped it upon hers, then kissed her hand and released it.

"It is beautiful!" she cried, holding it to the light. "But it is your good-luck ring—you should not give me your good-luck ring!"

"I shall not need it any more," he said. "*As père de famille*, I shall not tempt Fortune. I shall just grow fat and lazy." He drew his coat about him.

"You are going?" asked madame.

"Yes, I must be getting back."

"But is it true, Danilo, that you have all that money in your purse?"

"Yes, it is true."

"It is very foolish, and very dangerous."

"Dangerous? In Monte Carlo, where one meets a gendarme at every ten steps? Besides—do not worry—I shall place it in the bank as soon as possible. Unless—have you need of some?" he asked, and placed his hand in his pocket.

"Ah, no!" she said quickly, with a gesture of repulsion.

"It is yours if you want it," he persisted, his hand still in his pocket, a strange smile on his lips.

"I do not want it," she answered quietly.

"Then, good night," said the prince. "You have been very good to me, madame; I shall never forget it, and shall wish your happiness always. And you, monsieur," he continued to Selden; "I regret that it has not been my good fortune to know you better—I feel that we might have been friends. But I wish you all good fortune." He hesitated, his eyes on Selden's, as though debating whether to say something more; then, with a little shake of the head, turned to Miss Fayard. "And to you, mademoiselle, again I say good luck. I am sure you will bring good luck to others. How old are you?" he added, as though struck by a sudden thought.

"I am nineteen, monsieur."

"Nineteen. A good age—a lucky age!" he said, and kissed her hand. "And you, Monsieur Davis—but I do not need to wish you good-fortune, you have it there." He nodded toward the girl. "Do not worry, my friend, I shall do my best to make your sister happy. I can promise, at least, not to annoy her. Good-by!"

And, with a wave of his hat, he was gone.

They all sat for a moment without speaking, staring at the door through which he had vanished. Then Davis reached for his glass.

"Yes, he is mad," he gulped. "But what does he mean, going away like that? He—he frightens me!"

Again there was a moment's silence. Perhaps he frightened all of them. Madame Ghita touched her eyes gently with her handkerchief.

"He reminds me of a man about to go over the top," said Selden pensively, "in a sort of ecstasy. I have seen them like that many times, as they stood waiting for the word."

"Yes," cried Miss Fayard, with a little catch in her throat, "the word to go forward to their death!"

"It is not always death," said Selden gently, his heart very tender for the lovely, sad woman beside him. "Sometimes it is victory!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

They still tell, at the Sporting Club, of the last visit of Prince Danilo. There have been other visits more spectacular, ending with a pistol shot on the terrace or a draught of poison in the wash room; but of them no one speaks. There have been many persons who won more or lost more—and were promptly forgotten. But there was something about the prince that night, an air of mystery and unreality, which the on-lookers never forgot; and his style was

so exquisite, his bearing so perfect, that they have ever since served as a model by which the attendants measure each new aspirant for the honors of the rooms. And all are agreed that they have never been approached.

That visit, indeed, has not only been remembered, but is rapidly passing into legend. Already it has been richly embroidered, and reasons the most fanciful have been advanced as to why the prince chose to play a certain number or why he chose to play at all, and dazzling accounts have been woven of what would have happened if he had played at any other table in the room, instead of the one he actually selected. All of which is, of course, inevitable; because the great diversion of the habitués of Monte Carlo, aside from trying to devise a system to beat the bank, is explaining what would have happened "if!" How many times daily the bank would be broken but for that little word!

As a matter of fact, when the prince left the Hôtel de Paris, he probably did not expect to play at all, for he asked the giant, bemedaled negro who keeps the door to call his car. The negro explained respectfully that it was his infinite regret to be obliged to inform monsieur that a slight accident had happened to the car; a careless chauffeur, in turning, had backed into it and damaged the front axle slightly. Already it was being straightened in the hotel garage, and would be ready in twenty minutes. If monsieur wished another car?

"No, I shall wait," said the prince, and he walked slowly down to the terrace and stood for a moment looking out to sea. A gardien saw and recognized him, and saluted respectfully as he passed.

He might have stood there until the car was ready, but for a violent gust of rain which swept suddenly in from the sea and drove him back up the steps. At the top he hesitated. The

lights of the Sporting Club gleamed on his left, and at last he turned slowly toward them. Perhaps it was in his mind that, since the Goddess of Fortune had turned away her face so persistently of late, this might be the moment of her relenting.

At any rate, he mounted the steps to the entrance and passed in.

The rooms were crowded, as always, and all the tables were in play, but he passed through without pausing or looking at any one, and walked into the buffet, where he ordered a whisky and soda, and drank it standing at the bar. Then, as though his resolution was taken, he walked quickly back into the gaming rooms, stopped at the nearest table, changed a thousand-franc note for ten plaques, and placed them around the number nineteen.

The *chef de parti*, sitting in his high chair behind the croupiers and surveying the whole board, must have sensed something unusual in the prince's manner, for he watched him intently, but no one else paid any attention to him. Every one was absorbed in the play.

An attendant asked him if he wished a chair, but he shook his head and remained standing.

"*Faites vos jeux, messieurs, faites vos jeux!*" called the croupier, and bets were placed up and down the board, but the prince alone was on nineteen. "*Les jeux sont faits?*" the croupier asked, leaned forward, picked the little ivory ball out of the compartment into which it had fallen the previous play, gently reversed the motion of the wheel, and, with a quick snap of his middle finger, sent the ball circling around and around the cupped rim of the wheel—around and around, six times, seven times, eight times, and then its pace began to slacken.

"*Rein ne va plus!*" called the croupier sharply, and the ball fell with a rattle into the middle of the wheel, coasted up its raised center, hesitated for the merest instant, and settled with

a quick snap into one of the compartments.

"*Le dix-neuf!*" announced the croupier. "*Rouge, impair et passe.*"

Breaths that had been held were released, and there was a murmur of voices lamenting that they had not been on nineteen.

For the prince had won.

It was not very much—perhaps fifteen thousand francs—but he seemed to regard it as a sign, for he, too, took a quick breath and nodded to an attendant, who hastened to find a chair for him. The prince sat down, placed his winnings in front of him, and began to play with absorbed attention, always on or around or in connection with the number nineteen.

There have been many stories of desperate persons who risked an entire fortune on a single turn of the wheel and lost, or of fortunate individuals who won enormous sums by permitting their stakes to accumulate as the same number came out again and again. Neither of these things is possible, for the bank sets arbitrary limits to the play, running from a hundred and eighty francs on a number, which pays thirty-five for one, to six thousand francs on the simple chances, odd or even, red or black, high or low, which wins an equal amount. So that, if one plays the maximum on all the chances it is possible—though rather difficult—to lose about thirty thousand francs, or to win a little over a hundred thousand. But that is the limit.

So the prince, playing cautiously and confining himself at first to the cheveaux and carrés, took a long time in losing the fifteen thousand francs he had won, even though nineteen did not come again. Twenty, seventeen, and twenty-three came, which helped to recoup his losses, and it was at least an hour after he had sat down that the last of his fifteen thousand francs were swept away.

He glanced at his watch and made a

motion as if to rise, then decided to wait for the next play.

The ball fell into nineteen.

There was an outcry of sympathy and indignation on the part of the spectators. What a shame, what a crime, that his number should come at the very moment he had ceased playing!

Quietly, as though moved by some power stronger than himself, the prince drew his purse from his pocket, opened it and laid it on the table before him.

And this time he staked the maximum.

It is not often that any one stakes the maximum at Monte Carlo. Even in this day thirty thousand francs is a considerable sum. So an electric whisper ran around the room that something unusual was going forward at the prince's table, and the crowd around it became thicker and thicker. The *chef de parti*, scenting a battle royal, sent hastily to the cashier for an extra supply of funds.

The hand of the croupier was perhaps a shade less steady than usual as he picked up the marble and started it on its run. It spun, faltered, rattled, clicked.

"The twenty-seven," announced the croupier. "Red, odd, and low."

The prince had won six thousand francs and lost twenty-four.

Imperturbably he placed his bets again.

It was at this moment that Selden entered the room.

The prince's abrupt departure had left a constraint upon the dinner party, which was not to be shaken off. They had gone from the dining room into the salon, and there, after one or two ineffectual attempts at gayety, Davis and his fiancée had withdrawn to a corner sofa to discuss certain strictly intimate affairs, and Selden had smoked a cigarette with Madame Ghita and talked of desultory and unimportant things—of everything, indeed, except the one

thing which had been in his mind to say when he was buying the roses.

Impossible to say that now; impossible even to hint at it. It would be indecent, like wooing a woman whose husband was dying in the next room! Besides, she was in no mood for such confidences; she was *distracte* and sad. The conversation faltered and died away; and presently he summoned up the courage to take his departure.

She had been obviously grateful that he should go.

He was too depressed and agitated to think of sleep, so he slipped on his coat, left the hotel and descended to the terrace, just as the prince had done half an hour before.

The rain squall earlier in the evening had swept the terrace bare, and he found himself alone there, except for the gardien. Masses of slaty clouds were fleeing across the sky before the gusty wind, with the moon peeping between them now and then and sending fugitive gleams of light over the white-capped waves, which hissed and moaned dolefully as they were driven in upon the rocky beach. More doleful still was the rustle of the palms and the clatter of the rubber trees, flapping in the wind like a flock of ghostly night birds. And above him gleamed the lights of the casino, standing like a courtesan, white and gilt and laboriously gay, but at heart most dismal to all!

Selden gave himself up for a time to the luxury of self-pity, to that most dangerous of all dissipations, a fit of the blues. What was the use of going on? What was the use of having ideals or of fighting for them? The world paid no heed. What, indeed, was the world but a huge casino, where every one was struggling to win his neighbor's gold?

Why, above all, should he worry himself about a woman who was sad because another man was leaving her?

8—Ains.

But here his sense of justice asserted itself. The man was not leaving her—she was sending him away. He had come seeking her and she had refused to go. She had made her choice. But how could she help being sad at the thought that one epoch of her life was ended? She had lived with this man for four years; he had no doubt been kind and generous in his way. At the end he had come offering everything he had—and she had sent him away.

Where had he gone?

A sudden thought startled Selden out of his moodiness. What had the prince meant when he promised to give his money to the bank? Why had he smiled so ironically? Which bank?

In a moment Selden was hurrying toward the Sporting Club, and the instant he entered the rooms he knew that his suspicion was correct. That dense crowd around a single table could mean only one thing—somebody was playing the limit.

"He is playing nineteen—always nineteen," said a man beside him to his neighbor.

Nineteen! Then of course it was the prince.

It was some time before Selden could get near enough to see what was going on, but meanwhile the marble had been spun twice and he heard the croupier announce two and eleven. Then he managed to worm himself into a position from which he could see the prince.

Danilo seemed entirely cool, nonchalant—*dégagé*, even. He was smoking a cigarette and tossing his notes into place upon the board as though they were so many bits of worthless paper. He seemed equally indifferent as to whether he won or lost, and totally unconscious of the gaping crowd that watched him. Selden recognized in his bearing the cold fury of the confirmed gambler, which stops at nothing. There had been in his head the idea that he

might intervene, but he saw that it was useless. To speak to the prince now would be to insult him.

"The thirty-five!" announced the croupier. "Black; odd, and low."

Well, that was not so bad—six thousand on low and six on odd. But the next number was six and the board was swept clear again.

The prince proceeded calmly to renew his bets.

Nineteen must come sometime, Selden told himself. If it came once, the prince would win back all he had lost. If it came twice, he would be a hundred thousand francs ahead.

Sixteen! That was good—thirty thousand francs, nearly—a gain. But the next numbers were fifteen, thirty-three, three, and again six, and the prince had lost another hundred thousand.

Nobody else was playing; it was a battle between the prince and the bank. *Le directeur des jeux* had come out from his little office to watch it, and to take command, if necessary.

The prince lighted another cigarette and placed his money again.

Nineteen!

There was a little cheer from the crowd as the croupier counted out the various bets, one after the other, and pushed the notes across to the prince.

Again now! And every one pulled for nineteen as the little ball spun gayly around.

But it fell into eight, and again the board was swept clean.

That was the beginning of a bad run; six—there was a fatality about that six—eight again. Thirty-three, twelve, two, twenty-four—a little gain there!—fifteen. And then there was a short rally: sixteen, twenty, twenty-three; but never again nineteen. Then another bad run, and the pile of notes under the prince's hand diminished rapidly. He did not hesitate—always he played nineteen.

The crowd was beginning to get impatient with him. Why nineteen? Why keep it up when he saw it was not a good number? And as if to mock him, the croupier at the next table could be heard announcing nineteen! But certainly he should change—if not the number, then the table. It was imbecile to keep on like that!

But the prince did not change.

It was nearly two o'clock when he finally put his empty purse away and rose to his feet.

"Messieurs," he said, with a little bow to the *directeur* and the *chief de parti*, "I have to thank you for a very pleasant evening."

He walked calmly to the door, got his hat and coat from the *vestiaire*, and ran lightly down the steps.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Selden took the train for Nice next morning with a sense of impending fatality. He was greatly depressed. The emotional events of the previous evening had overtaxed his nerves. He had slept badly, disturbed by elusively threatening dreams, and his brain was muggy and distraught. He was almost sorry he had not heeded his impulse to run away—to leave his lamp unlit! He doubted more and more whether its feeble rays would ever guide him out of the labyrinth in which he was madly wandering, and from which there seemed to be no way of escape.

The train he had caught was a local, and as it bumped its leisurely way along he had time to review his position over a contemplative pipe; but the more he considered it, the worse it seemed to grow; turn it as he might, he could discover no bright side. Of one thing only he was certain: his life would never again be the calm and satisfactory thing it had been. A few days had changed it beyond recognition; it was

no longer simple; it was almost unbelievably complex. He could scarcely believe that only eighty hours had elapsed since he had walked into the lounge of the Hôtel de Paris to meet the Countess Rémond.

At Nice, the passengers were hurried across the tracks, for the Rome-Paris express had been signaled, and as he gave up his ticket to the guard at the exit, Selden's eye caught a familiar figure. It was Halsey, walking nervously up and down in the waiting room, pausing now and then to watch the people pouring from the train shed. His eyes met Selden's for an instant, but he gave no sign of recognition. He was rather a pitiable figure, his face white and drawn, his eyes shot with blood—evidently his affair with the countess was not progressing smoothly. Well, he was only getting what he deserved, Selden told himself as he turned away.

It still lacked fifteen minutes of the hour named by the baron; so, deciding that the walk would do him good, Selden turned briskly down the Avenue des Victoires toward the sea. The street was swarming, as usual, with tourists and winter residents, whose presence there was always an insoluble mystery to Selden. He never could understand why any one would want to spend a winter at Nice, when there were so many other places up and down the coast infinitely more attractive. It was the herd instinct, he decided, which brought these thousands of people here to spend their vacations in an inordinately expensive hotel or a dingy pension, with nothing to do except walk up and down the Promenade des Anglais, or look sadly on at the manufactured gayeties.

He found the Promenade a solid mass of people moving in two slow currents, one up, one down, for this was the fashionable hour to get out and take the sun and exhibit one's new

gown, which some man somewhere had earned the money for. Truly, human nature was a curious thing!

The gates of the Villa Gloria were open, and he walked through, past the *concierge*, who recognized him and touched his cap, up the path to the door, where a waiting attendant received him and ushered him at once into the salon.

The king and Lappo were already there, and greeted him warmly. Then the baron introduced him to the notary, Monsieur Noblemaire—a true type, with hawk nose, crinkly beard, and carefully brushed clothes of rusty black—who, with an assistant, was going over the papers to make sure that everything was in order.

The prince came in a moment later, greeted Selden casually, and sat down beside the long table which occupied the center of the room. He was dressed in irreproachable morning costume and, save for a slight pallor, gave no hint in his appearance of his exciting experiences of the night before. No one looking at him would have suspected that he had lost a fortune! Selden was conscious of a great relief, for he had expected he knew not what—some excitement, some discomposure, at least some vestige of wreckage after the storm. Certainly the prince had consummate self-control!

Then the door opened and Mrs. Davis and her daughter were shown in—the former very warm and voluble, the latter as composed as the prince himself.

Nothing could have been more delicate, more exquisitely attuned to the situation, than the way in which Danilo greeted her, respectful, reserved, but with just a hint of ardency beneath the surface. From the quick glance she shot at the prince's face, Selden inferred the manner was new to her, but it was evidently not distasteful, and as he turned away to meet Mrs. Davis,

who was bearing down upon him, he saw that the baron was contemplating it with satisfaction. The prince had been tamed. He was playing the game, and playing it extraordinarily well!

"How do you do, Mr. Selden!" cried Mrs. Davis. "It was *too* good of you to consent to be our witness! I should not have dared to ask, but the dear baron assured me that you were very good-natured——"

Miss Davis came forward and gave him her hand.

"It was nice of you," she said, "and it relieves my mind."

"Relieves your mind?"

"I regard it as the seal of your approval," she explained, smiling.

"Do you still need the seal of my approval?" he asked.

"It is very comforting to have it. That is what your being here means, isn't it?"

"I suppose so; but you must remember that I am looking at it from the outside, while you——"

"I know what you mean," she said, as he hesitated. "There is no reason why you should beat around the bush—I am not a child!"

"Of course, but it had bothered me a little!"

"It needn't bother you any longer. It is all right. I had a letter from her this morning—a very splendid letter. Some day, I should like to know her."

Mrs. Davis, to whom Monsieur Noblemaire had been presented, was announcing that Charley had stopped for their notary, since it *was* necessary that they have their own notary, was if not?

"But surely, madame," said Monsieur Noblemaire, who knew some English. "Otherwise it would be most irregular."

Well, so Charley had gone around for him, and should arrive at any moment. And, sure enough, at that moment Charley did arrive with the other notary in tow.

The two men of the robe greeted each other with punctilious politeness. To look at them, no one would have suspected that they played dominos together every evening at the café on the corner.

"We are all here, I think," said the king, and took his place at the head of the table. Baron Lappo conducted Miss Davis and her mother to seats at the king's right. The prince took his place at his grandfather's left, and their partisans ranged themselves on either side below them. Selden found himself near the foot of the table, facing Monsieur Noblemaire's assistant.

For some minutes there was a great rustling of papers on the part of the notaries. Then they bent their heads together across the table in earnest conversation, while Monsieur Noblemaire explained two or three of the clauses to his colleague, who seemed to be objecting to something, as a matter of form, no doubt, but who finally nodded his head as though satisfied, and settled back in his chair.

Then Monsieur Noblemaire cleared his throat and rose to his feet.

"*Messieurs et mesdames*," he began, speaking in French, with a pronounced accent of the Midi, and dwelling upon every syllable after the manner of an orator, "we have come here to-day to sign and to acknowledge certain articles of agreement between the royal house of Ghita and the American family Davis, which envisage the marriage of a prince of that house with a daughter of that family. With your permission I shall proceed to read those articles."

He adjusted his glasses and began to read, with great care and solemnity, while his fellow notary followed on a duplicate copy, checking off the articles one by one. Selden listened with deep interest. He was gratified to hear the baron's assertion verified: Miss Davis' fortune was to remain absolutely in her hands, and was to descend to her chil-

dren. The necessity of children was recognized quite frankly, and their status, rights, and privileges were provided for in great detail. During the lifetime of the king he was to be their guardian jointly with their mother. After his death this duty was to devolve upon Baron Lappo. The prince was to have a yearly allowance of two hundred thousand francs and his present debts were to be paid. In return, he engaged to reside within the borders of his country for ten months of every year, unless his presence elsewhere was necessitated by reasons of state approved by the king.

Selden glanced up and down the board, as Noblemaire read slowly on. The king and Lappo were listening attentively, careful to let no word escape them; the prince sat with arms folded and eyes downcast and face inexpressive, like a prisoner listening while sentence was pronounced; Miss Davis sat quietly attentive, her hands folded in her lap. Her attitude seemed to say that, since this document concerned her so closely, it behooved her to be familiar with all its provisions, but it was a matter of business, not of sentiment. Selden recalled the baron's words about her. Was it really some old trial, some cruel disillusion, which had given her this serene self-control? Had she really suffered some disastrous adventure? It scarcely seemed possible.

And then Selden remembered a sentence which her brother had uttered, apparently at random, the night before. It had passed unheeded then, but Selden found that it had somehow stuck in his memory. What was it he had said? "It's pretty tough that it should happen twice!" Something like that.

That what should happen twice? That she should be deserted twice? For another woman? Was it that old affair with Jeneski he referred to? Had Jeneski deserted her for another woman—the Countess Rémond? But

the Countess Rémond hated him, too! She also was seeking to be revenged.

And suddenly the pieces of the puzzle fell together in his mind like the bits of colored glass in a kaleidoscope, and he understood.

Jeneski was to be overthrown because two women hated him; the destiny of a people was to be changed, the course of history altered, to gratify their vengeance.

Ah, well, that had happened a thousand times; women were always altering the course of history to suit their whims or their passions; damming it up, throwing it into strange channels.

Or perhaps it was only his too-fervid imagination magnifying a chance remark. Myra Davis certainly did not look like a girl to seek adventure, to court disaster. At any rate, whether or not she had been deserted once, she was not being deserted twice. Presently she would be a princess, and after that queen regent. Her son would be a king—the first king in history to be born of an American woman. That, also, would alter its course!

Monsieur Noblemaire's voice droned on, and each of them sat and listened and dreamed his dream; and Mrs. Davis', perhaps, was the sweetest of all—of a place on the steps of a throne.

Then suddenly the voice ceased and startled them awake.

"You find it correct, I trust, monsieur?" inquired Monsieur Noblemaire of his fellow notary.

"Yes, monsieur; in every detail."

"Then we have only to sign," said Monsieur Noblemaire; and turned to his assistant for the pens, ink, and blotter.

Selden was amused to see that the pens were long quills.

Monsieur Noblemaire dipped one of them in the ink, picked up the paper, and approached the king.

"If you will sign here, your majesty," he said, and laid the paper before him,

indicated the place, and handed him the pen.

The king scrawled a great "Pietro" across the page.

It was the prince's turn next, and the baron witnessed the signatures.

"Now, mademoiselle," said Monsieur Noblemaire, and laid the document in front of Miss Davis.

She took the pen from him with a hand that shook a little.

"No, no!" cried a voice outside. "It is impossible, monsieur; you cannot enter! Monsieur——"

"But I must enter!" cried another voice, and the door was thrown open with a crash.

CHAPTER XXV.

For a moment no one stirred—just sat and stared at the man who came, swift and resolute, into the room, while the frightened attendant goggled from the door behind him—a man of perhaps forty, with dark, vivid face, outlined by a little beard, and a mop of black hair falling over his forehead, and deep-set eyes gleaming under heavy brows—a man with a bearing indescribably confident and audacious; just sat and stared as he advanced calmly to the table, bowed to Selden and to Baron Lappo, and then went straight to Myra Davis, took her hand—dashing to the floor the pen he found in it—and drew her to her feet, against his breast.

"Little one," he said, "I have come for you."

But she held him away from her—held him away with arms trembling and convulsive, but inflexible; and there was something like terror in her eyes as she looked at him.

"No, no!" she gasped. "You are horrible to come here like this!"

"I love you!"

"It is too late!"

"It is not too late! Why is it too late?"

"Because—I do not—love you any more!"

"No?" he asked calmly, without any motion to release her. "Of course, in that case——"

But by this time the king was on his feet, his face purple.

"What is this farce?" he roared.

"Jacopo—Mario—throw this fellow out!"

"One moment, sir," said the stranger.

"Perhaps Baron Lappo will do me the honor to present me."

And the baron, his face a study, rose in his turn.

"Your majesty," he said, "this is Monsieur Jeneski."

Jeneski! Selden, of course, had recognized him, and Mrs. Davis, too, apparently, from the energy with which she now rushed forward, rescued her daughter from his grasp, and tried to kill him with a look. But to the king it was undoubtedly a blow, and for an instant his hand fumbled at his breast. Yet not for nothing had the old warrior reigned for sixty years in the midst of hate and violence, and his composure was back in a moment. He signed to Jacopo to close the door.

"Monsieur Jeneski," he said, with a bow, "I have often wished to meet you."

"I must apologize for my abrupt entrance, sir," said Jeneski, smiling his appreciation of the king's aplomb, "but I feared that I should be too late."

"Too late for what, sir?" asked the king.

"Too late for this ceremony," explained Jeneski, with a gesture toward the papers on the table.

"Ah," said the king, "you wish to witness it?"

"I wish to prevent it," corrected Jeneski quietly.

The king wrinkled his brow incredulously, and his color heightened a little.

"Really——" he began.

"Believe me, sir," said Jeneski

quickly, "I deeply regret this violent and dramatic procedure. I assure you that it is not at all in my character, but I had no choice. I have strained every nerve to reach here at the earliest possible moment. I should have arrived last night, but was delayed by a series of misadventures which I shall not weary you by reciting. So when, twenty minutes ago, at the villa of Madame Davis, I learned of this conference, I could only hasten here and force my way in."

"You may as well force your way out again," broke in Mrs. Davis, who had listened to all this with a face even redder than the king's. "If you think for a minute my daughter will have anything to do with you——"

"Hush, Mother," whispered the girl, her face convulsed.

"I confess," said the king politely, "that I do not understand. Is it that you profess to have some claim upon this young lady?"

"Only the claim of a man who loves her," said Jeneski humbly.

"Love——" began Mrs. Davis violently.

But again her daughter stopped her.

"I am at a very great disadvantage," went on Jeneski. "It is very difficult to speak—to explain—to say what I have to say thus publicly. If I might see Miss Davis alone for one moment——"

"Never!" cried her mother.

His eyes implored the girl, but she turned her face away.

"Very well," he said, and drew close to her side. "I must speak to you then, little one, as though we were alone. Forget that there is any one present except you and me." His voice was trembling with emotion. He paused an instant to collect himself, and moistened his lips nervously. "Before I say anything else, I must say this: for the wrong I did you in a moment of madness I have suffered

much. Perhaps if you knew the whole story—but no; there is no excuse. I say to you only that I have suffered, that I have done great penance. All that was torn out of my life and cast aside many months ago. Since then I have thought only of my country and of you. The baron can tell you that this is true—since he had used that old affair to secure an accomplice in the plot against me."

She was staring at him with wide-open eyes, white to the lips, her hands pressed against her heart. He made no motion to touch her, but his eyes never wavered from hers.

"Even then," he went on rapidly, "I would not have dreamed of coming near you—no, not yet. I would have worked on for my country and cleansed myself with sacrifice, loving you always and hoping that some day you might find me worthy; but this, this alliance—it must not be! Do you know what you are doing? You are riveting again on half a million people the shackles they have just thrown off after a struggle of two centuries!"

"We are willing to leave it to the people themselves, sir," put in the baron quietly.

"Ah, yes, after you have corrupted them with I know not what promises!" cried Jeneski. "Of course they will choose the easy way!"

"Well, then——" began the baron.

"They are not fit to choose—not yet. Let them learn first what freedom means. Come, I ask nothing for myself—nothing," he went on, turning back to the girl. "I have no right to ask anything for myself. Do I not know it? Yes, better than any one. But for my country I do ask, I have the right to ask, not much—only this: that you delay this marriage for a year, for six months, even—then leave it to the people!"

He had raised his arms in his excitement, and as he brought them down

with an impassioned gesture, there was a spatter of blood across the papers on the table, and a steady drip, drip, from under his sleeve and across his left hand to the floor.

He seized his left arm near the shoulder and held it tight.

"What is that?" asked Myra Davis, taking a quick step toward him. "Are you hurt?"

"It is nothing," said Jeneski impatiently, "less than nothing; just one of the misadventures which delayed me." Then a little smile flitted across his lips, and he looked at the baron. "I confess, however, that I did not suppose the baron would descend to methods so—so primitive."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the baron.

"Was it not you," asked Jeneski, still smiling, "who posted that big Englishman on the platform up yonder to shoot me as I left the train?"

The baron's face was livid.

"Monsieur Jeneski, I swear to you that I——" he began.

"It was not the baron," put in Selden quickly. "It was the Countess Rémond. I knew she was driving Halsey on to something—but I never guessed it would be——"

"Ah, well, I should have guessed," said Jeneski. "I apologize to you, baron. After all, it is nothing—a scratch across the arm. I had time to bandage it but hastily, so it bleeds a little. I am sorry."

There was a moment's pause. Then Myra Davis released herself from her mother's grasp, and turned to Baron Lappo.

"Is it true," she asked, "what he said about that—that affair?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered the baron grimly, "it is true."

The color had come back into her face and her eyes were shining.

"And it is true that you have suffered?" she asked of Jeneski.

He made a little motion with his hands, more expressive than any words.

"I have suffered, too," she said simply.

"Oh, my love," said Jeneski humbly, "some day I hope you will find it in your heart to pardon me!"

She stood an instant longer looking at him, then she held out her hand.

"I pardon you now!" she said.

It was over. The Davises were gone, and Selden, too, had tried to go, but the baron had asked him to remain.

The king had behaved magnificently. Well he knew the folly of trying to argue with a woman's heart, and he had uttered no word of disappointment or reproach. Instead, having thrown and lost, he took defeat like a sportsman and a gentleman, faced ruin, exile, tragic failure with a smile; had even wished her happiness and kissed her hand in farewell. With Jeneski he had been almost cordial.

Selden had never admired him so much, though he told himself it was this very habit of dissimulation which rendered the king least admirable. Perhaps he had not yet lost hope—some fanatic with a better aim than poor, fuddled Halsey might take a shot at Jeneski—or there was the countess herself, presumably raging somewhere at the failure of her plot. There was still that possible alliance between young Davis and the Princess Anna. Finally, there was always that huge sum which had been offered for his abdication; which he had once refused, but which he could still accept whenever it seemed wise, and upon which he could live comfortably for the remainder of his life. No doubt it was such considerations as these which enabled the king to bear up so well.

Selden was surprised to note that Danilo seemed far more deeply affected. He was slouched forward in his chair, staring at the papers with the dash of

blood across them, his face ghastly in its pallor.

"We must consider," said the baron, "how best to announce this to the world. Monsieur Selden, I am sure, will not wish to do us unnecessary injury."

"Certainly not," said Selden. "I shall use only the official version."

"I will not conceal from you," went on the baron, "that this—debacle, I think I can call it—has left us in a somewhat delicate position. We had made certain financial arrangements, based on this alliance, which will have to be canceled, or at least reconsidered. Fortunately——" He hesitated, glancing at the king.

"Yes," the king nodded, "the money is still in my bureau."

"Nevertheless," went on the baron, "we can scarcely hope to escape severe embarrassment."

The prince stirred uneasily, passed his hand before his eyes, and rose unsteadily to his feet.

"You will excuse me?" he said.

The king nodded and the prince went slowly out.

"I did not suppose it would be such a blow to him," said the king, as the door closed behind Danilo. "Well, let us hope it will make him more serious. Continue, baron."

The baron paced up and down for a moment, lost in thought.

"Of course she will marry Jeneski," he said.

"Not at once; but ultimately—yes, I suppose so," Selden agreed.

The baron glanced at his master.

"Yes, I understand, Lappo," said the king quietly. "You would say that it is finished, that the game is up. Well, we shall see. I have confidence in my star! At least— What was that?"

From somewhere in the house had come a muffled report as of a door slamming—or a pistol shot.

A sudden pallor swept over the king's face.

"Danilo!" he cried, and started to rise, then sank back clutching at his breast. "Danilo!"

But Danilo lay sprawled across his bed, a bullet through his heart.

He had managed to escape, after all!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Since this is our last night in Paris," said Selden, "we ought to celebrate it. What shall we do?"

"The opera," replied Renée instantly. "Let us see what it is."

It was "Samson and Dalila." And it started at eight o'clock.

But they were there when the curtain rose, and were soon under the spell of the wonderful music with which Saint-Saëns has clothed the old scripture allegory of man's weakness and woman's perfidy—a drama which is re-enacted daily wherever men and women live, and so touches a chord in every heart. Surely no lovelier song was ever written than *Dalila's*

"Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix comme s'ouvrent les fleurs
Aux baisers de l'aurore."

"My heart opens at thy voice as the flowers open to the kisses of the dawn."

And no more effective scene was ever staged than that of the blinded *Samson*, chained like a beast to the mill, and pushing it round and round. So the great drama swept on to the supreme moment when *Samson*, praying for strength, bends his back between the mighty pillars of the temple and brings it crashing down upon the heads of his enemies.

There was to be a ballet afterward to a Chopin suite, and when Selden and his companion came back from a turn in the foyer, they found that the front row of the orchestra, which had been empty during the opera, was filling up

with distinguished-looking old men, most of them with the rosette of the Legion gleaming red in their coats.

Renée nodded toward them with a smile.

"You see," she said, "it is as I told you. They come for the ballet only. But look—who is that? Is it not Baron Lappo?"

"So it is," said Selden, and they watched him take his seat, a little thinner, perhaps, with the passage of the months, a little grayer, but still erect, alert. "I wonder what he is doing in Paris? Shall we waylay him after the ballet?"

"Yes, let us. There are so many things I should like to ask him."

"I, also," said Selden, and then fell silent, for the music had begun.

There is nothing lovelier to be seen anywhere than that Chopin suite as danced at the Paris opera.

"Do you regret that it is not you?" asked Selden, as the unapproachable Ida Rubenstein came forward again and again to acknowledge the applause.

"Not the slightest—not the smallest bit," she averred, nestling against his shoulder. "I know too well what is behind the scenes. Besides, I could never have been like that. I was not a great dancer."

Selden put his hand over hers and held it tight. He could never get over his astonishment at the thought that this magnificent woman loved him, was his.

"We must hurry," she added, "if we are going to catch the baron."

"Wait here a moment," said Selden, "and I will go around and get him. I should like to surprise him—I don't think he knows."

She nodded, and he hurried away to the door by which the baron would emerge into the foyer. Yes, there he was—not changed; and yet changed, too, in some subtle way, clouded, a little sad, with the lines about the eyes a trifle more pronounced.

Selden's heart moved curiously, as he watched him coming forward; he had never before realized how fond he had grown of the old diplomat.

"My dear baron," he said, and stepped forward with hand outstretched.

The baron adjusted his glass and looked to see who it was.

"Why, it is Monsieur Selden!" he cried. "My dear friend!" He caught Selden's hands in both of his and shook them up and down, his face irradiated. "How glad I am to see you again! Come, we must have a talk—yes?"

"By all means! But first I want you to meet some one." Selden caught the baron's arm and guided him to the spot where Renée waited. "Baron," he said, "permit me to introduce you to my wife."

"Your wife!" The baron's lips were trembling as he pressed them to Renée's hand. "*Tiens!*" and he dropped his glass and polished it vigorously. "But, my dear children, how happy you make me! I should like to embrace you! I am a silly old man—yes?" He touched his handkerchief to his eyes without shame. "But you recall so many things! Where shall we go? We cannot talk here. To Rizzi's—it is but a step!" Seizing an arm of each, he led them down the great stairway and across the place, talking in broken sentences all the way.

Monsieur Rizzi knew the Baron Lappo, and he snatched the reservation card from a glass on the corner table and seated the baron and his guests there, and himself took the order.

"Let me see," said the baron, "you used to have a Moët et Chandon, very dry——"

"Ah, yes the 'ninety-eight," said Monsieur Rizzi. "We still have a few bottles, monsieur."

"It is foolish at my age, at this hour," said the baron; "but never mind; and a little lobster—yes?—with mayonnaise."

I have not forgotten your mayonnaise. And afterward—what?"

"Permit me," said Monsieur Rizzi, "a surprise."

"Very well," agreed the baron; "I am sure it will be a delightful one." And then as Monsieur Rizzi hastened away to make sure that the order was properly executed, the baron turned back to his guests. "Now, let me look at you," he said. "Madame, I have never seen you so lovely, so radiant. And you also," he added to Selden, "you also appear content!"

"Content is a weak word!" said Selden.

"So—it is well! But would you believe, madame, that I one day found this great imbecile in his room at Monte Carlo, trembling with fear, packing his bag, even; planning to run away—to run away from a great happiness. Incredible, is it not? But men do stupid things like that sometimes, and women, too, though not so often. So, because I had grown fond of him, I ventured to give him some advice."

"Which I took," said Selden.

"You have not been sorry?"

"Sorry!"

"Just the same," went on the baron, "you are not worthy of her."

"Good heavens, don't I know it?" groaned Selden. "Don't I wake up every morning in a panic for fear it is only a dream!"

"*Fi donc!*" laughed Renée. "How silly you both are!"

The waiter had filled the glasses, and the baron lifted his from the table.

"Words are so weak to express what is in the heart," he said, "but I am sure you know what is in mine—every wish for your happiness and your good fortune, and may you always love each other!"

They drank, and set the glasses back upon the table, and there was a little silence.

Then Monsieur Rizzi brought the

lobster for the baron's approval, and himself proceeded to dismember it.

"There is something else that I remember very vividly," went on the baron. "That day, when I found you so depressed, there was another thing that worried you—how did you say it?—that your future was behind you! Is it still there, or is it in front, where it should be?"

"It is in front again," said Selden, with a smile, "due also to this wonderful woman."

"I will not have it!" cried Renée.

"It was Monsieur Scott's idea."

"But it was you who found a way to realize it."

"It needed but a word!" she protested.

"Please tell me about it," said the baron, who had watched this altercation with a smile.

"It was like this: it is true that at one moment this imbecile was so stupid as to think his career ended," Renée explained. "He permitted himself to become discouraged because he could not, all at once, persuade his country to think as he did, make it think, as he calls it, internationally."

"That is something no country does," observed the baron. "Perhaps it will come some day, but I am not at all hopeful. The better we know other peoples the less we seem to like them. But go on."

"It was Monsieur Scott—a friend—who proposed the idea of an organ, a journal, you understand, *hebdomadaire*—where he could gather together a band of fanatics like himself and keep on fighting for his cause. The idea appealed to him, he began to think that in control of such a journal, he might find life again worth living."

"So he doubted, did he, that life was worth living?" commented the baron. "Even when he had you? It is easy to see that he is an American!"

"Yes; Americans are like that. They

have something, I know not what—an engine, a dynamo—inside them, driving them on. I doubt if they are ever really happy, as a Frenchman can be happy—entirely happy and content. At least, not for long; they feel they must be doing something."

The baron nodded.

"You are right. What is Monsieur Selden going to do?"

"He has his journal!" cried Renée, and clapped her hands.

"Yes," laughed Selden, "she got it for me, much as she would buy a toy for a child, to keep it quiet."

"But how?" asked the baron.

"Ah, it was simple," Renée explained.

"The only difficulty, it seemed, was one of finance. You remember that young Monsieur Davis?"

"Very well."

"You knew, by the way, that he had married my niece, Mademoiselle Fayard?"

"But certainly!" laughed the baron.

"That was another of my defeats. The Princess Anna is still a spinster, though she also has become a bride—but of the church. Monsieur Davis is happy, I trust?"

"Oh, yes; but he also is an American, though not so earnest a one as my husband here. Nevertheless, he wished to find something to do, some way to employ his money—a way that would amuse him and not be too fatiguing. I had only to suggest the journal."

"It is going to be rather wonderful," said Selden, his eyes shining. "I have been in New York all summer making the arrangements; I was astonished at the enthusiasm; I shall have a splendid staff, and perhaps we shall accomplish something yet! But before I started it, I came back for this lady."

"And now you are returning?"

"Yes, we sail to-morrow on the *Paris*."

"That is good," said the baron.

"But come—let us drink to the journal—that it may accomplish all you hope for it! Yes," he went on after a moment, "I am glad you are going back, though that means that I shall, perhaps, not see you again, for I am growing old. But it is not well for an American to stay too long in Europe. It is difficult for me to explain just what I mean. It is like an apple." He picked one up from the basket of fruit on the table. "One gathers one's crop of apples and one puts them away for the winter, and some of them keep very well. But others, after a time, begin to show little specks here and there. That does not hurt them—indeed, it improves their flavor—but they must be used at once. Otherwise, almost before one knows it, they grow rotten at the core and have to be thrown away."

"Americans are like that. They do not keep well in the atmosphere of Europe. It is good for them, yes, up to a certain point. They grow a little specked, perhaps, but their flavor is better, more rich, more satisfying. But beyond that—no. Forgive me," he added, carefully replacing the apple. "An old man likes to preach. Ah, here comes the surprise!"

Monsieur Rizzi's surprise proved to be a *soufflé*, piping hot, with an ice in the middle, exquisitely delicious.

"But tell us about yourself," said Selden. "What are you doing in Paris?"

"It is a long story," answered the baron musingly. "After the king's death—which, as you know, was very sudden—I felt as you had felt, though with much more reason, that I was finished, that there was nothing left for me to do but creep away somewhere and die. Then Jeneski sent for me. He asked me to be his minister in place of one whom he had discovered to be a traitor to him. And I found that I still loved my country. We get along very well together."

"And his wife?" asked Renée.

"She has already become a sort of saint to her people; they adore her, and they have reason to, for there is no country in Europe which progresses as ours does. She is very happy."

"Have you ever heard from the Countess Rémond?" Selden asked.

"Not directly; but I believe she is in Budapest plotting to place Charles back on the throne. It seems she has a passion for restorations. That poor Monsieur Halsey has been released, as perhaps you know. He was sent to a *maison de santé* for a time, but Jeneski refused to press the case."

They sat silent for a moment with full memories and tender hearts. Then the baron looked at his watch.

"It is good to be here," he said. "It renews my youth. But I must go. Monsieur Rizzi," he added to the bow-

ing *restaurateur*, "permit me to compliment you upon this little supper. I have never tasted better mayonnaise, and your surprise was exquisite. No, I shall not need a cab. I have but a step to go."

They passed together into the street.

"My hotel is just there," said the baron. "So I shall bid you good-by." He looked at them for a moment pensively. "The French have a proverb," he added, "'To part is to die a little!' It is true, especially for the old. Write to me sometimes."

"Oh, we shall!"

They watched him as he walked away—a gallant figure, defiant of the years. At the corner he turned and waved his hand. Then he was gone.

Selden raised his hat.

"I hope," he said softly, "that some day I shall meet another man like that!"

THE END.



THE STATUETTE

THERE sits the laughing girl.

Now can you see
Whom she is laughing at—
You or me?

Head thrown back, arms flung out,
Shaken with glee.
Which is the funnier—
You or me?

Still time may heal the wound,
We may laugh later,
You—the dead model, and
I—the creator!

RAE ALLEN.

A Portrait of Miss X

By Arthur Tuckerman

Author of "Breath of Life,"
"The Finished Product," etc.



THE sea, like the air, was motionless, its mirrorlike expanse unmarred but for the narrow, chalky trail left by the ship's propeller, a trail that curved in a gentle arc to the shimmering horizon. A quiet afternoon, too, its stillness broken only by the lazy throb of the ship's engines, and the occasional shrill cry of a sea gull careening in the sun's glare.

The *Valetta's* passengers—only seven in number and all of them men—had very sensibly gathered on the port deck, where a considerate officer had provided a short stretch of canvas awning; inadequate shelter, perhaps, from the sun's slanting July heat, yet offering a far pleasanter retreat than the stuffy, old-fashioned saloon below decks. Of the seven passengers, six formed, that afternoon, a garrulous group just forward of the main companionway as they exchanged quick-fire comment on the whys and wherefores of British policy in the Levant—a topic which has been worn threadbare on every ship plying Mediterranean waters west of Brindisi for the past sixty years.

The seventh passenger, Eli Cornwall, remained aloof from the rest, stretched out on his deck chair in a shady corner, reading a red-covered Baedeker.

"That chap Cornwall's a card," remarked one of the Meadow brothers, corpulent, red-faced Yorkshiremen bound for Constantinople, on an optimistic attempt to introduce Sheffield cutlery into Ottoman households. "Why doesn't he join us? I've never seen the like of him for keeping to himself. Two days now since he came aboard at Brin-

disi, and he hasn't spoken to a living soul."

Chevalier Edouard Mermot, French assistant consul, outward bound for Smyrna, shrugged expressive Gallic shoulders.

"*Ma foi!* He has the right to keep to himself, hasn't he? I, personally, do not seek his company; he has hardly the appearance of a lively fellow!"

The others of the group turned to gaze for an instant at the solitary passenger; then resumed, with renewed energy, their political discussion.

It was, perhaps, only natural that Eli Cornwall's aloofness had caused comment aboard the *Valetta*. On a vessel of her type, scarcely one thousand tons, and carrying but seven passengers besides her mixed cargo, only an invalid confined to his cabin, or a person excessively reticent by nature, could have avoided constant and daylong contact with his fellows passengers.

Throughout the long, lazy, summer afternoons while the ship plowed her steady ten knots down the glassy Strait of Lepanto there was, certainly, little or no excuse for a refusal to exchange the ordinary social amenities. Once, indeed, the Reverend Elmer Green, missionary, late of Locust Falls, Iowa, had made a gracious attempt to draw the hermit into conversation but Cornwall had been frigid to the point of rudeness, and the reverend gentleman's report of the incident to the other passengers had been tinged with a sense of righteous indignation.

As the argument on the British Near-East policy became more vehement,

voices were spiritedly raised. Eli Cornwall, trying in vain to concentrate upon his Baedeker, glanced down the deck at the offenders—and frowned his patent disapproval. He was not an agreeable man. Reticent to a degree, unprepossessing in his hard, angular appearance, he showed no love for his fellow men; he felt that he had no reason to. Life, for him, had been a long, hard struggle; illusions had, in his earliest youth, been swept away from him. And now, at the age of thirty-five, at the height of his financial successes, he had suddenly made the discovery that his own existence was a dreadfully hollow affair.

Fate, it must be told, had some years ago played a cruel hand against Cornwall; had dealt him an almost mortal blow. After that he had become a quiet, bitter recluse, a confirmed cynic. The only aim left to him in life was, apparently, to add a few more millions to his present fortune—and this, he was clever enough to realize, was an empty and unsatisfactory form of diversion.

To the vacant deck chair beside that of Eli Cornwall there came presently Leonardo Perry, weary of the interminable argument of his companions; a young man whose pallid face was damp with heat; whose untidy black hair fringed the back of his mauve soft collar; whose white ducks, stained and unpressed, were in sharp contrast to the creased perfection of Cornwall's flannels. Perry sat down heavily, thus disturbing Cornwall's cherished sense of isolation, and proceeded to add insult to injury by lighting an old and evil-smelling pipe.

Cornwall stirred in his chair, coughed; then, suddenly putting down his book, said sternly:

"Young man, your pipe is extremely distasteful to me."

Perry, surprised, became instantly apologetic. Too much so, Cornwall thought; he had half hoped that the young man would prove defiant, for he

was in mood for a mild quarrel that afternoon. Perry, however, extinguished his pipe and, gazing at the lean, lantern-jawed, colorless features of the other man, replied:

"Of course, my dear sir. It was very inconsiderate of me. And yet if I'd been smoking good tobacco you probably would not have objected. You know what rubbish they sell on board."

Cornwall, detecting a tentative prelude to a garrulous half hour, refused to accept the bait, and merely nodded. The young fellow was obviously an artist. He disliked artists—shiftless, untidy, lazy creatures who did nothing to help the world. Cornwall fully believed that making two million a year was, somehow, beneficial to humanity—exactly how, he never paused to consider.

He continued to read his Baedeker.

But Perry was insistent. With a gesture of a long, pale, artist's hand he indicated the mirrorlike surface of the sea..

"Not a breath of air. I wonder how long it will keep up. They say it's sometimes terribly stormy here—"

Cornwall, eyes steadfastly on the printed page before him, gave an unintelligible grunt.

For perhaps five minutes young Perry studied the elder man furtively, and in those five minutes came to certain definite conclusions. An artist, be he proficient in his work or not, is oftentimes a rare judge of character. Perry decided that Eli Cornwall had a secret trouble—a trouble gnawing at his heart, ruining his happiness. For when the man put down his book for an instant to gaze out to sea, lost in some obscure process of thought, his cold, steel-gray, calculating eyes suffused, for a fleeting second, to a look of inexpressible sadness. He was, Perry concluded, very unhappy.

"Getting off at Athens?" Perry asked presently.

Cornwall admitted that such a pro-

ceeding on his part was possible. And then, apparently convinced that any further attempt to read was useless, submitted himself resignedly to conversation.

"I presume you're an artist, young man," he said, in a tone of half-tolerant contempt, thinly veiled.

"I dabble at painting," Perry admitted modestly. "I'm going out to Therapia to stay in a friend's villa there. He writes that the coloring on the Bosphorus is marvelous. I might try some water-color work there, and sell it when I return to America."

Cornwall, bored by the subject of art, pricked up his ears.

"Surely you're not an American?"

"My mother was a Roman lady, sir. My father was an American professor of art in that city."

Cornwall lighted a fifteen-lira cigar, having already forgotten the incident of Perry's pipe, as he said succinctly:

"There's no money in your game."

"N-no. There's hardly any financial reward. But I love my work. It's the same, trite old idea that a man ought to do what he loves best that keeps me going. Now you, I suppose, find inspiration in the wild ups and downs of the stock market, and those tremendous deals in abstract figures which convey nothing at all to me."

Cornwall was at once resentful of the personal note. He was willing to discuss other men's affairs not his own.

"You can't love *things*, young man. Love—genuine love—is devoid of ulterior and selfish motives. Once in a long, long while you find a supreme instance of the love of one human being for another; but it's mighty rare in this world to-day—and when it does occur it generally means unhappiness in the ultimate outcome."

Perry, racking his brains, tried to remember the tragedy in Cornwall's past. That there had been one he was sure. Cornwall was a public figure, whose

name appeared frequently in the press. Casually voicing his thoughts, he said:

"You get lots of publicity, sir. Now to a young artist, one tenth of that publicity would be a great boon. And yet it's the hardest thing for us to get."

"Cursed newspapers!" Cornwall exclaimed, displaying a wholly unexpected bitterness. "They pry into your family affairs, shatter your privacy, like damnable spies. No, young man, I'll wager that you wouldn't enjoy having your troubles flaunted before the world. It's too big a price to pay for the small benefit derived."

The tragedy in Cornwall's past seemed very near at that moment. Perry, trying hard to remember why the papers had been full of his name, blurted out thoughtlessly:

"Yes. Some years ago, it seems to me, the papers had a story about you, but——"

Instantly Cornwall's gray cheeks flushed to a darkling red. He rose from his chair; tucked his book under his arm.

"We will not refer to that," he said, and strolled stiffly away.

All that afternoon Eli Cornwall's mind dwelt on the tragedy of his life, to which young Perry had so unfortunately and clumsily referred. Cornwall had been trying to forget—for six long, weary years. Sometimes he did forget—for an hour or so.

As he paced the deck a wave of cynicism pervaded him, and sharpened the knife thrust of his misery. This young artist, he told himself, only spoke to me because of my money; only made my acquaintance with an eye to possible future benefits.

Cornwall, you see, had never known a friend; only acquaintances and enemies. Acquaintances, subservient and suave, quite ready to seize their share of the Cornwall millions should opportu-

nity present itself. Enemies with exactly the same purpose in view.

"Oh, damn my money!" he thought. "Every one, every living soul, is after it!"

And yet, somehow, he could not bring himself to the point of actually disliking Perry. There was something genuine and eager and vaguely sympathetic about that struggling young worm of an artist that Cornwall had found in no other man for many a long year.

As he passed Perry's stateroom on his way to the dining saloon at seven that evening he glanced involuntarily through the wide-open door. Perry was not there. It was a diminutive cabin—the cheapest on the ship, probably—an airless, sweltering cubby-hole. Observing it, Cornwall for a fleeting instant felt pity; pity which changed to surprise when he saw that fully half the floor space was monopolized by a wooden crate, some five feet square and about four inches in thickness, resting at an angle against the wall of the cabin. He decided it could contain but one thing—a painting.

"Eccentric!" he murmured. "Eccentric—like so many artists. Travels with an enormous picture, which he considers so precious that he doesn't send it down to the hold, where it belongs, with the rest of the baggage."

He continued on his way to the saloon, an old-fashioned, low-ceilinged place where dinner was being served at one of the long, narrow tables. Contenting himself with a curt nod to the other passengers, he took his seat and gave his order gruffly to an obsequious Italian steward.

The captain's chair, he noticed presently, was unoccupied. The cause of this became apparent when the silence of the room was suddenly shattered by a melancholy, long-drawn blast from the ship's siren. Another blast followed, after an interval of a minute. A thick fog, the steward explained, had

9—Ains.

crept over the water at sundown; the *Valetta* was proceeding at half speed; the captain had decided to remain on the bridge.

All through dinner the siren kept up its monotonous warning. The effect upon the passengers was depressing; conversation became fragmentary; eventually died out.

At eight o'clock Cornwall made his way aft to the smoking room. Reaching the threshold, he paused for a moment before entering the room, a tall, somber figure, immaculate in evening clothes. He was the only passenger aboard the ship who troubled to dress for dinner—an illuminating comment, in a way, upon his complete independence of action. He surveyed the room thoughtfully, a trifle distastefully, then chose a leather sofa in a corner alcove, as far removed as possible from the poker table where the other passengers were assembling, and settled down to read.

A few minutes later young Perry entered the smoking room, and without hesitation chose a chair near Cornwall.

Cornwall, after a good dinner and a half bottle of mellow Burgundy, was a trifle more communicative than usual. For some minutes they conversed about the ship.

"A rotten old tub," Cornwall asserted. "This is what happens when one firm is given a monopoly of trade. My cabin is miserable; and yours, from what I happened to see of it, is even worse."

"Beggars can't be choosers," Perry retorted, smiling.

Now Eli Cornwall was, if anything, practical. Somewhat diffidently he remarked:

"You'll pardon me if I suggest that the crated picture in your cabin takes up a good deal of room."

He meant the suggestion in a kindly way. Indeed, he spoke to the young artist in a friendlier manner than he

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had employed in years toward any human being.

"Oh, but I couldn't think of putting it in the hold," Perry said promptly.

Cornwall was puzzled.

"Unless it's by one of the old masters I should think insurance would cover it," he suggested.

Perry shook his head.

"No insurance could cover the value of that picture to me, sir."

His eyes were strangely bright; his sallow cheeks unaccountably flushed.

"Who painted the picture?" Cornwall asked.

"Why, I did, sir!"

The elder man permitted himself a slightly supercilious smile. They were all the same, these artists! What an inordinate, preposterous idea they had of the value of their own work!

"Mr. Cornwall, you don't understand," said Perry quickly, conscious of the smile. "It's a matter of sentiment. That picture means—well, it means life itself to me!"

"Sentiment!" Cornwall's tone conveyed a world of irony.

Stung to sudden anger by the man's colossal intolerance, Perry cried:

"So you pretend you don't believe in sentiment!"

Cornwall chuckled grimly.

"I pretend nothing, young man. I've gone through a hard school, and I know just what life has to offer, and what a man has to pay for it. Sentiment! Bah! That's for the dreamers, the lotus-eaters. A man with sentiment in his heart gets nowhere these days."

He lighted a long, dark cigar, eying Perry half humorously, half pityingly.

"There's only one way," Perry said indignantly, "to bring home to you, Mr. Cornwall, how I feel. That picture, for me, is the preservation of a memory that—" He paused, leaned forward, lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "*Don't memories mean anything to you, sir?*"

Cornwall, flushing, drew back swiftly, almost as if he had been struck. He prepared, even wanted, to be angry, yet found himself replying softly:

"I think I've already told you that I dislike referring to the past. Life is hard enough, without reopening old wounds."

He took up his book. For a while there was silence. The smoking-room steward appeared with a tray of drinks in tall glasses, a plate piled high with sandwiches. Now and then the fog horn broke the stillness of the room with its melancholy wail; drowned the subdued murmur of the poker players, and the gentle click of chips.

Perry closed his eyes and abandoned himself to reveries.

Memory carried him vividly back to the vineyard-terraced hills of Tuscany; the white road that wound between white walls from Florence to Fiesole; the cypress-crested hills; the campanile of a medieval church rising sheerly into the azure sky above the hill town's scarlet roofs. It was high noon, and he had been painting steadily all the morning, painting one of those tiny roadside shrines, a plaster crucifix in a niche beneath a bougainvillæa-sprayed wall. He had been hot and tired and thirsty. And then the vision had appeared at the top of the wall, smiling down upon him; a vision in white. He remembered, oh, so vividly, those laughing, violet eyes; the corn-colored hair; cheeks that were tinted like the inside of a rose petal.

They had talked. She lived in a villa on the other side of the wall, with two maiden aunts. The next day he had suggested that he paint her—they had met again by agreement. She had clapped her hands and had thought the idea a splendid one; and so he had set to work to paint her, just as he had first discovered her, leaning over the white-and-scarlet wall, gazing at him with candid, smiling, youthful eyes.

He had come again and again, at the same hour every day. They had undertaken a gentle conspiracy, because it appeared that her aunts had a curious prejudice against insolvent young artists. The picture had at last been completed; the best thing, far and away, that he had ever done, because inspiration—and something much deeper—had magically guided his brush.

And then, one morning, he had gone there and she had failed to appear; but he had found a little note waiting for him at the foot of the wall: "They found out and sent me away"—she had been only eighteen, you see—"but some day I'm coming back to sit for you again."

Cornwall's voice broke in gratingly, on the evanescent dream.

"What is the name of your picture, and its subject, Mr. Perry?"

He was, very obviously, trying to be agreeable. The effort touched Perry.

"Oh, just 'A Portrait of Miss X,'" he replied, with a nervous little laugh. "I called it that, after the modern salon fashion. You see—"

He never completed the sentence. At that precise moment there came a grinding, shuddering crash; a shock that threw them from their seats. Electric lights went out instantly. Pandemonium leaped up in the darkness as heavy feet stampeded toward the narrow smoking-room door. Only Cornwall moved calmly and slowly.

"Hurry!" he heard a voice cry. "Hurry! She's listing to starboard—sinking! My God!"

He took his time; came at last to the open deck, gray with a thickening, swirling fog. He heard the terrified screams of a Latin stewardess, and the gruff voice of a ship's officer, very calm and very sober and very English:

"Steady there! Steady! There's room for every one in the boats if you'll only keep your heads about you!"

Cornwall, groping his way blindly toward that voice, ran suddenly into a seething, fighting mass of humanity; was conscious of half-naked, sweating bodies against his. Some giant hit him full in the face; he fell; a heavy boot kicked him. The world became a numbing blackness.

He found himself struggling in water that was surprisingly warm. Stygian darkness all round him. Voices in the remote distance and a faintly perceptible plashing of oars. And then a sudden, dreadful, red flare from the *Valetta's* furnaces a hundred yards away, as she heeled over slowly, like some great wounded animal, and sank. He was drawn down in a whirling vortex; came up fighting for his life. He tried to shout, but his voice was only a weak whisper.

He commenced to swim feverishly through the darkness. At the same time he thought: Here am I swimming for my life, and yet life holds no single ray of promise for me! What a God-forsaken fool I am!

But that inborn, eternal instinct of preservation persisted; conquered the cynicism of his mind. He swam on and on. He was a strong, fit man, because he had not, so far, permitted wealth to bring physical deterioration as an accompaniment.

Perhaps he swam for five minutes; perhaps ten. He could not tell. Perhaps he was swimming in a circle! Be that as it may, he came presently in contact with a piece of wreckage, riding easily on the becalmed surface of the sea. He stretched out an arm and grasped it; discovered that by paddling with his feet and holding on he might rest himself. He began to regain strength—even to speculate upon his chances of being rescued. The *Valetta* had apparently been run down by some other ship. If the floating wreckage supported him until dawn, searchers

might find him. He realized that there was a long, black, lonely vigil ahead.

Minutes drifted by; turned into hours. Regaining his voice, he had shouted, for a while, until his throat had become dry and burning. There were no signs of life about him; no longer the distant splash of oars. The silence and darkness all around him was unbroken.

During those black hours the tragic memory that had gnawed at his heart for six empty years became intensified until it was a torture. To think that his fiancée, his Helen, the one person in his life who had caused him happiness, whom he had loved so deeply, had died in this same dreadful way that he was going to die! Vividly he recalled that wartime afternoon in New York when, at his club, he had idly picked up a newspaper, and the flaring headlines had in one dreadful moment changed him from a happy man to a wretched, cynical recluse.

Transatlantic torpedoed! Hundred perish; among them oil king's fiancée.

And then, all the horrible publicity, the persistent interviewers, the garbled facts, the distorted photographs of her, day after day!

He realized now what she must have gone through before merciful oblivion had overtaken her; and his grief was sheer agony.

Had he been good to her? He believed he had—but it was so hard to tell. Had she been happy during those short months of their engagement? Ah! If only, if only there was some divine way of ascertaining these things; an instant of communication with her. A sign that he had been forgiven for his shortcomings!

His misery was abruptly broken into, then, by a rippling and splashing of water near him; and he felt the wreckage to which he was clinging tremble under sudden pressure.

"Careful," he called out warningly, "or you'll sink us both!"

Then came Perry's voice:

"Cornwall. Good heavens! I thought you'd gone down. I've been swimming for hours."

Again the wreckage trembled.

"Hold on to it lightly," warned Cornwall, and added: "I thought you'd gotten away in one of the boats."

"No," Perry's voice quivered. "You see I tried to rescue my picture. Got it out on deck, but they wouldn't take it in the boat. So I stayed!"

"The man's mad," thought Cornwall.

All at once Perry gave a cry, a terrible, unearthly cry.

"Cornwall! My God! This is the picture that we're clinging to!"

The gentle put-put of a motor boat's engine broke in on them before Cornwall could summon a reply. Rapidly it grew louder. An oblique, shifting beam of light pierced the darkness; swept the placid, deserted surface of the sea; picked them up at last in a sharply defined circle of white light. For an instant they were blinded; could see nothing.

The black hull of the motor boat loomed up over them, towering and grotesquely menacing; struck the floating thing to which they were clinging, and tore it asunder with a loud, crackling sound, a splintering of wood. A rope splashed near Cornwall; he seized it, and was hauled aboard.

Men crowded about him, shouting, gesticulating. All eyes were riveted on something that was floating slowly past the boat in the white glare of the searchlight's beam. Cornwall, too, looked and saw, in the midst of the wreckage, a picture. A portrait of a young girl, every detail for one instant miraculously clear in the motionless ray of light. Cornwall's eyes suddenly widened; he reeled; was steadied by kindly hands. "A Portrait of Miss X!" He gave a great cry, and sank down to the bottom

of the boat. There, on the tranquil surface of the sea, he had seen the beloved face of his fiancée.

"Here!" cried a sailor sharply. "Pass along the brandy. The quiet un's fainted."

It was then that the picture, as if knowing that its humane task was com-

pleted, turned slowly on end and disappeared beneath the water's unrippled surface.

Perry, bending anxiously over Cornwall, saw his eyes open. For an instant these two looked at each other, in a flash of wordless, yet complete, understanding.



THE Greeks and Romans did not go in for pet Persians and Angoras. At that time, the cats brought from Egypt were considered too odd and rare, and too costly, for any except the ultrarich. Instead of a cat, therefore, weasels and white-breasted martens were kept to destroy the luckless mice which, even in the days of the toga, found their way into the most fashionable of homes.



MADAME DE VEYRA, wife of the Philippine commissioner to the United States, assures the world at large that Filipino girls have no wish to flirt. "Invariably," she says, "the girls of my country walk on the streets with eyes straight before them and present so severe a mien that no man would be bold enough to approach them!"

The difference, it would seem to us, is in the men. "Faint heart," you know—



IT might be well for those brides who are disconcerted by the number of useless and undesirable gifts showered upon them to adopt the Chinese custom with regard to wedding presents. In China the offerings of friends are sent to the home of the bride-to-be where they are duly inspected by her parents. Gifts that do not meet with the approval of that small board of censors are returned to the donors. By this simple, but effective, means the bride is spared the never easy task of expressing gratitude for presents that do not please.



BYLAND ABBEY, the beautiful and romantic ruins that lie at the foot of the picturesque Hambleton Hills in Yorkshire, England, is being restored by the English Office of Works. The task of rebuilding this ancient landmark is by no means a simple one, as the heaps of broken stone strewn about the weed-grown acres give little hint of the original beauty of the Abbey with its vistas of stately columns upholding massive arches. But the experts who are at work there hold the key to the puzzle and each fragment of stone is being classified and preserved in the hope that its original location may be revealed.

This old Abbey was built by a band of wandering monks in the twelfth century. Driven from Cumberland by the Scots, they fled to Furness where, in place of the expected welcome from the monks of that monastery, they found the doors bolted against them. And so they wandered over the hills to Thirsk to beg the aid of Lady Gundreda de Mowbray. She, it is said, touched by the forlorn appearance of the wanderers, opened her gates to them and bestowed upon them a little church.

Forty years later, through the generosity of Roger de Mowbray, they were able to build the Abbey at Byland where they dwelt in security until the Reformation, when the soldiers of bluff King Harry demolished the buildings and left the luckless monks homeless once more.



Kings of Hearts

By Anice Terhune

Author of "More Super-Women"

Beau Brummel: "The Last of the Dandies"

A HEAVILY veiled woman entered the Hôtel d'Angleterre at Caen, France, one day in 1830. It was well toward the hour when the fashionable world dined, and the corridors reflected an animated and colorful scene. Somewhere, music was playing. There were flowers, jewels, and bright eyes to be seen on all sides.

But the veiled woman, apparently, was not in the least interested in any of these things.

She went straight to the *concierge* and asked for the proprietor. In answer to his courteous question as to what he could do for her, the woman called him aside and offered him a large sum of money if he would allow her to stand where, without being seen, she could catch sight of a certain guest of the hotel as he passed into the dining room.

The bribe was so very large that the proprietor gave his consent at once. Asking no questions, he placed the woman behind a pillar where she could see, but not be seen.

A few minutes later a bent, elderly man moved slowly and laboriously

across the lobby. From her hiding place the veiled woman stared breathlessly at him until he passed out of sight. Then, bursting into tears, she rushed from the hotel. Her name was never made public. The proprietor kept the secret well. All we are permitted to know is that she was one of the many women who had adored Beau Brummel in the days of his greatness, and that she had journeyed from England to take a last look at her fallen idol.

George Bryan Brummell was known as "the last of the dandies." By sheer audacity and impudence and a certain genius for dress, he rose from obscurity to dizzy heights of fame and fortune. And that same gift of impudence at last caused his downfall.

For many years, however, he ruled the world of fashion and the world of hearts. Women made fools of themselves over him and besought him to accept their estates, as well as their love. It is not on record that he ever refused either gift.

He began climbing the social ladder when he was a mere lad. His father had prepared the way for him by doing

a bit of climbing on his own account; for George's grandfather was a pastry cook who also let lodgings.

When George's father grew up, he became first a clerk and then private secretary to Lord North. What is more to the point, he saved the bulk of the money his baker-father had made, doubled and redoubled it, and left his son a hundred and fifty thousand dollars when he died.

While he was at Eton George showed an absolute genius for dress. His faultless clothes caused his chums to nickname him "Buck Brummel," a term which soon was changed to "Beau Brummel." This latter title stuck to him all his life and has clung to his memory ever since.

Young Brummel set out to make his mark.

His nickname gave him an idea. It was an era of untidy, sloppy dressing. Young Beau at once appointed himself a sort of arbiter of fashion and criticized mercilessly such people as did not dress as he thought they should. His own quiet and "elegant" attire made the clothes of all the dandies look flashy and cheap by contrast. He was the envy and the despair of London.

When he was only sixteen years old the Prince of Wales—afterward George IV.—happened to meet him, and was greatly attracted to him.

Thomas Moore tells us that the prince was completely charmed by Brummel and listened to his slightest word as if it were a jewel of wisdom.

"He began to blubber," says Moore, "when Brummel did not like the cut of his coat."

As a distinguished mark of favor, the prince gave Brummel a commission in his own regiment—the Tenth Hussars—the wildest and most extravagant regiment in the army. But Beau Brummel had no taste for soldiering, even under such delightful conditions; so he soon threw up his command. His

excuse for doing this is characteristic of the man's impudence.

"I have learned, your royal highness," he said to the prince, "that we are ordered to Manchester. I really could not go! Think, your royal highness—Manchester!"

After selling out his commission, he devoted himself exclusively to his profession of dandy extraordinary.

He was the idol of women wherever he went; and when he elected to stay at home he was bombarded with scented notes, gifts, and invitations to dine here, there, and everywhere. Women of the highest rank vied with each other to get him to sit in their opera boxes. And if, perchance, he could be persuaded to remain there for an hour at a time, it was regarded as a great social triumph for the lucky woman who had the power to keep him so long.

Among the women who were absolutely devoted to him was the Duchess of York, the eldest daughter of Frederick William II. of Prussia. She was the center of the most exclusive circle in London; and at her salons one was sure to find Beau Brummel. Her fondness for Brummel lasted as long as she lived; but in this, as in his other love affairs, the woman was the pursuer rather than the pursued.

Brummel and Elizabeth were together constantly, however, and he seems to have played his amusing game most skillfully. He reduced love-making to as clever a science as fashion-making, and played off one woman against another in such a way as to keep them all dangling after him.

He was kinder to the duchess than to most of the women who adored him. And who knows but that under his flowered-velvet vest his well-controlled heart may not have given him a good deal of trouble? Perhaps Brummel was cleverer even than we give him credit for being; for he carried on the

intrigue right under the Duke of York's nose, without getting found out.

It was the duchess' custom to hold a Christmas house party every year. The climax of the festivities, always, was the Christmas tree. Besides the tinsel, candles, and other appropriate ornaments, there were little, inexpensive gifts from the hostess to her guests, and vice versa. The presents, as every one knew, were merely trifles, in recognition of the Christmas spirit; the sort of things one often sees on house-party Christmas trees to-day. You may imagine the surprise of the guests at one of these parties when the duchess' present from Beau Brummel was opened and found to be an exquisite, Brussels-lace dress worth seven hundred and fifty dollars! It would be worth ten times that now, and even then was considered a princely gift.

The Duke of York's eyes must indeed have been fast shut!

Beau Brummel conquered hearts wherever he happened to go. And as the King of Hearts became more indifferent, the women grew more infatuated with him. The wonderful and brilliant Madame De Staël admitted that her greatest unhappiness while in London was her failure to please him.

There were plenty of other women who tried in vain to ensnare him. An amusing story is told of one damsel who had done everything she could think of to get him to return her love—always without the slightest success. Finally she stationed herself at a window at an hour when she knew he generally passed her house on his way to the drawing-room of some luckier woman.

As the elegantly dressed Beau drew near, twirling his gold-headed cane and fingering a rose in his buttonhole, the woman leaned gracefully from her open casement and asked in her sweetest tones if Mr. Brummel would not come in "and take tea" with her.

"Madam," replied Beau, in his haughtiest manner, "you take medicine, you take a walk, you take a liberty; but you *drink* tea!"

And, with the stiffest of bows, he left her.

At another time a titled woman was in the seventh heaven of bliss because at a reception Brummel happened to exchange a few words with her behind a clump of tall ferns. Hardly knowing what she was about, she apologized simperingly because he ran the risk of being seen talking to so unfashionable a person as herself.

"Pray don't mention it, dear Lady U——," he returned gallantly. "There is no one near us!"

The poor woman was unable to keep back her tears at this crushing retort.

Brummel had a great reputation for wit among both women and men, and his repartees were the talk of the town. One bright morning as he strolled down Piccadilly, he met his friend, Byng, a curly-haired dandy, driving in his carriage. By his side sat a fat poodle.

"Ah, Byng, old chap, how do you do?" said Brummel condescendingly, as he shook hands. Then, glancing from his friend's curly hair to the equally curly poodle, he added: "A family vehicle, I see!"

Byng never heard the last of it, and was known as "Poodle Byng" forever after.

Yet Brummel was good tempered; in fact was never out of temper. People always forgave him for the pointed barbs in his *bons mots*.

Byron acclaimed him as "one of the three greatest men of the nineteenth century." The other two, he modestly admitted, were Napoleon and himself.

As Beau Brummel reigned supreme in the world of dress, it would be unfair to him not to tell you a little about his preparations for his morning toilet.

The Prince of Wales set the fashion of journeying to Brummel's house in

Chesterfield Street, to watch the wonderful performance.

First of all the dandy was shaved. This was always a most serious moment, the greatest care being taken that not so much as a nick should be made in Brummel's delicate skin. After the shaving process was safely over came the bath—which always consumed two solid hours. Before he dressed Brummel invariably took a hand mirror and tweezers and went carefully over his face to see if by chance one hair had been left to mar the perfectly smooth surface of his chin.

Then the model for the world's best clothes began to array himself in the day's assortment of them.

"I believe in very fine linen, plenty of it—and country washing," he was wont to say.

Brummel never used perfume, as did most of the dandies of the day. He loathed it. His dress reforms all seem to have been sensible.

At the next stage of his dressing Brummel donned a thick silk bed gown and velvet smoking cap trimmed with gold braid and tassel. In this costume he was wont to chat with the prince, read the newspapers, and mix his snuff.

After a short rest he began the finishing touches of his irresistible toilet, and got himself into his morning parade costume; which was generally a long, brown frock coat, with velvet collar and silk linings. His dark trousers were perfect in fit, and were fastened under his polished boots with a strap. A very large, white-cambric neckcloth was wound several times around his throat, and fastened in front by a small gold pin. His waistcoats were the only bits of gaudiness he allowed himself—and he owned a house full of them. They were usually of expensive velvet, flowered in silk, silver, or gold, according to his whim. He carried either a gold or silver-headed cane. His fascinatingly hand-

some face, with its odd, gray eyes, was framed in a neatly arranged reddish-brown wig. His high hat had a rather flaring brim.

His manners, we are told repeatedly, were perfect in every way; yet, when he sallied forth to make a morning call, or sauntered through the Mall, he never lifted his hat to a lady. "Because," he said, "he could not readjust it at the proper angle without a mirror."

This sort of thing made women love him all the more. His impudence more than all else raised him to the pinnacle where he preened himself above the heads of other men like a golden weather-cock.

Women's hearts fluttered at his approach. Mothers implored their debutante daughters to make a hit with him if possible, as all their social future depended on whether or not Beau Brummel deigned to notice them.

One time, on entering a ballroom late, he went straight up to the most beautiful girl in the room and asked for a dance. The girl was very haughty as well as handsome, and had, up to that moment, refused to dance, though all the most attractive swains had been doing their best to secure her as a partner.

When Brummel bowed before her—she knew him at once, though she had never seen him before—the spoiled beauty blushed with pleasure, and accepted his arm with trembling hand.

"Who is that ugly-looking man leaning against the fireplace?" inquired Beau Brummel, as they paused for a moment in the dance.

"Why, that's your host!" cried the girl, astonished. "Don't you know him?"

"Oh, no," answered Brummel gayly. "I never saw him before! I wasn't invited—I just wandered in because it looked like a nice party. I don't even know in whose house I am!"

Brummel received numerous offers

of marriage—women were so crazy about him that common sense fled—but he never became sufficiently interested in any woman to marry her.

"Love is a sentiment so often and so easily expressed with a crow quill—and its feigned regrets made with a sponge and rose-water upon perfumed paper!" he exclaimed skeptically, once, when one of his adorers was accusing him of a lack of affection.

For his own protection, he seems to have preferred intrigues with women who were married, rather than with those who might possibly entrap him into marriage.

Madame la Baronne de Borrio, wife of a Russian officer stationed in England, fell desperately in love with the fashionable Englishman. Brummel flirted with her quite wickedly, and so alarmed the Russian husband that he finally snatched his wife from the well-groomed clutches of the man she worshipped and took her out of harm's way.

Among his myriad conquests were the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Hester Stanhope—herself a historic heartbreaker.

Brummel kept up an extravagant household, as a matter of course; but with the money inherited from his father, and a strangely lucky hand at gambling, he contrived to tamp his debts down to a livable level.

His impudence, more than anything else, helped to carry him along. For instance, when Lord Westmoreland invited him to dine "at three o'clock," he replied in his most blasé manner:

"Your lordship is very kind, but I really could *not* feed at that hour!"

This rude speech was picked up and quoted as an epigram.

Had Brummel possessed brains instead of mere smartness, he might have risen to some permanent height of fortune. He was the chosen friend of the prince regent. He carried all before him.

Aside from his looks, his clothes, his polished manners, and his sparkling repartee, he had a good voice, was a perfect dancer, and wrote excellent "fashionable verse." His tastes were always refined. He was, unquestionably, the man of the hour. For nearly twenty years he was the chief glory of English society.

Then, one day, he spoiled everything by carrying his audacity too far. The very impudence that had raised him brought him low. His success depended wholly on the favor of the prince. And at last he wrecked that success by publicly insulting his patron.

The accepted version of the story is that during a party at Carleton House Brummel, who wished to summon a servant to bring him some wine, loudly commanded:

"Wales, ring the bell!"

The other guests were horrified. But the prince calmly obeyed the impudent request. When a servant responded to the summons, the prince commanded: "Call Mr. Brummel's carriage." Then he ordered Brummel to leave the house.

Friends tried to effect a reconciliation. With this in view, they brought about a seeming chance meeting between Brummel and the prince during the fashionable morning hour in the Mall. But when the two came face to face, the prince "cut" Brummel, and stopped to speak to Lord Alvonley, who accompanied him.

Instead of showing chagrin at the slight, Brummel merely turned to his companion, and, insolently pointing at the prince, asked:

"Who's your fat friend, Alvonley?"

Nothing could have enraged the prince more. He was growing hopelessly stout, and was keenly sensitive over it. He never forgave the affront.

Brummel suddenly found himself thrust outside of Eden. With royal patronage gone, his luck deserted him. Men who had fawned on him, now

slighted him. His credit was no longer limitless. His creditors grew urgent; his magic at cards was gone.

Finally he was reduced to desperate measures. He wrote to a friend asking a loan of a thousand dollars. With his usual gay manner, he sought to pass it off carelessly.

"The banks are all shut," he wrote, "and all my money is in three per cents. It shall be repaid to-morrow."

The former friend wrote back: "All my money is in three per cents also—'tis very unfortunate."

Brummel dressed himself in his best, and went to the opera. When the third act was just beginning Brummel slipped out quietly, and stepped into a passing chaise. He had himself driven to Dover, and jumped on a boat. The next day he was safe in Calais. He never dared set foot in England again, for fear of being thrust into prison for debt.

For some time he lived a hand-to-mouth existence. Finally, to place him above actual want, he was given the meager post of British consul at Caen. This had lasted only about two years, when the consulship was abolished.

Brummel was again on the rocks. He was put in prison for debt; but his friends, of whom he still retained many, bought him his freedom. The ever faithful and loving Duchess of York sent him a luxurious armchair and many other gifts to add to his comfort. But his mind had begun to give

way. He was always imagining that he was holding a reception to the dukes and duchesses who had flattered him in the old days, and many of whom were long dead. As each supposed guest was announced, the ragged old man would rise, bow in his best style, and greet the invisible newcomer.

At other times he tottered about the street, his shabby finery jeered at by heartless small boys.

Finally he was removed to an asylum for insane paupers where in 1840 he died.

I do not like to think of him in these later years. Let us, rather, remember him in his glory. For, with all his faults, his very impudence claims our admiration. He was "not a parasite, he was an autocrat." He was a gorgeous butterfly who sipped the honey from whatever flower his fancy chose. A King of Hearts with whom all women fell in love and whom all men strove to imitate.

He left a salutary and lasting mark on the dress and manners of his day.

Let us leave him, then, walking in the Mall, with a flower in his button-hole, his snowy linen showing above his velvet collar, his hat at the proper angle, his gold-headed cane swinging jauntily, his well-shod feet treading on hearts in place of rose petals.

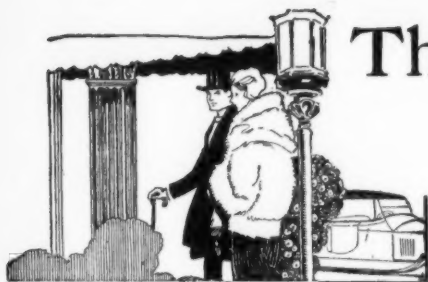
The butterfly was a gentleman,
Which nobody can refute.
He left his lady love at home
And roamed in a velvet suit.



SO DANTE'S BEATRICE

YOU said no word and yet we said farewell;
You touched me not, but still your kiss fluttered
A touch upon my lips, my eyes, my brow.
So Dante's Beatrice, so I can tell
One moment when lifted eyes uttered
Unspoken message and its spoken vow.

JEANNETTE MARKS.



The Girl Who Died

By Augusta Coxé Sanderson

BILLY MATTHEWS, American, stood safely covered from the rain in the Royal Academy entrance waiting for a taxi. Taxis, divers and sundry, drove in under the arched gateway from Piccadilly and up to the door to deposit visitors, but each time it was taken before Billy could push his way to it. "Some fat old party out with his harem saw it first," Billy would have said, and he continued to wait.

"Why, it *is* Mr. Matthews! I thought it was you." He turned in the tight crowd to face a handsome elderly woman in evening gown with a splendid sable wrap about her shoulders.

"Oh, how do you do?" said Billy cordially as he took her outstretched hand.

"All London seems in need of a cab, to-night," she continued pleasantly. "Elizabeth is out there now, fighting for one." Oh, here she comes—she must have got one."

A beautiful young woman, tall and dark and splendidly dressed, pushed her way toward them.

"Come along, Mother," she called. "Why, it's Mr. Matthews! Have you got a cab? No? Better come in with us, they're scarce as anything. We are going to the Savoy. You can take it on from there."

"Thanks, a lot! You are very kind. It seems my only chance of getting away to-night. Are you sure I shan't be crowding you too much?"

Billy settled himself on the small folding seat facing them and they all chatted pleasantly as far as the Savoy. There he handed them out, bade them good night, and had the cabby turn back through the Mall and Buckingham Palace Road to the American embassy.

"—and I don't know them from Adam's house cat," he finished as he told Welles his adventure.

"Hu-uh! Americans?"

"No—at least, I hardly think so. They didn't drop a single clew, except that they are new to London, just came to-day."

"A clever pick-up, I should say. Heard somebody call you Matthews. It doesn't take much for a starter."

"Oh, you're an old cynic, Welles. You've had too many years in the great and only British secret service, I'd say. Why, it was the mother who spoke to me first. Elizabeth didn't bother with me much. I've met them somewhere—and they're safe as the bank, too, I bet."

"You've got to be careful, boy. You can't—"

"I know you think I'm green, but you come along, too, to-morrow. You'll see. I'm going to have tea with them at the Savoy."

"What are their names?"

"I couldn't ask them that, could I, when they knew me so well? Look pretty, wouldn't it?"—disgustedly.

"How are you going to ask for them to-morrow if you don't know—"

"Asked them to meet me in the lobby—lounge, you call it. I'm not such a fool," he added, with a wide grin. "You come along and take care of Mother. I see right now I am going to be dippy about Elizabeth."

And Welles promised.

But it fell out next day that Matthews had tea with the two ladies alone, without the support of his friend. None of the three noticed a tall Englishman of perhaps forty who reconnoitered from the doorway and caught a glimpse of Billy and his party now blithely ordering tea. After the first inquiring glance he looked more intently, screwed a glass in his eye, and stared.

"Just faded away," would have been Billy's description of Welles' disappearance, had that unconscious youth looked up.

However, Welles' failure to join them did not dampen the spirits of the three at the tea table. The two women, quietly and richly dressed, seemed only pleased to renew what had evidently been an enjoyable acquaintance. They chatted and discussed the other tea groups, but again gave him nothing to indicate where or when that acquaintance was begun.

When tea had ended Elizabeth asked Billy to get their key from the desk.

"Number fourteen twenty-nine," she called as he sped to do her bidding.

It was some half hour after he had left them that he sauntered again to the hotel desk and asked to look at the register. Opposite Suite fourteen twenty-nine he saw that Mrs. George Alcott Merriwether and Miss Elizabeth Merriwether had arrived from Paris the day before.

And Mr. William Judson Matthews of New York and Long Island knew just as much as he had before—and no more!

"But I like them, both of them, especially Elizabeth. She's a peach." This

at the end of his report to Welles. "You were a piker not to show up."

"So her name is Elizabeth Merriwether? Billy, that girl—Elizabeth, as you call her—is dead and buried."

"What?"

"Dead and buried. In Monte Carlo. I can give you the date. October tenth, nineteen hundred and twenty. I looked it up just now."

"I—I think you've gone off your nut, Welles—I sure do!"

"Never more sane than at this instant. I knew the moment I saw her——"

"Saw her?"

"Them, to be exact. At the Savoy, this afternoon. On *that* side, by the wall. I was close enough to hear the younger one's voice. The old lady isn't dead, but——"

"I'll say she's not, nor Elizabeth either. But how did you see them? Where were you?"

"The great and only British secret service, my boy!" Welles could not resist this mocking reminder of Billy's sarcasm of the previous night. "But, seriously, I saw the women, both of them, in Monte Carlo at the time I speak of. I heard the girl had died there. I heard she had been buried. But I also heard that she had come to life again and I am not surprised that she has turned up here. She never met you in her life and—oh, hang it all, Billy! You know I am not given to slanging women, but she is a wrong'un. Better cut them out, as you'd say."

"I believe you're drunk, Welles—or, yes, that's it! You're jealous."

"I *am* jealous, my boy, jealous for your good name and your honor!"

Welles' earnestness could not but touch Billy, but he was not convinced.

"If you are not spoofing me, Welles, blamed if I can see your drift. You think I have been tricked, but why? What is the game?"

Welles, not to impose his cynicism, as Billy called it, upon the boy until it

should be necessary, took on a lighter tone.

"Oh, *beaux yeux*, I suppose. Just playin' round with you. You are a likely lad and obviously not averse to spending Father's dollars. Not a piker—Isn't that the word? You've got a good motor and you say you've booked the next few days full—drives, Chelsea Flower Show, dinner, et cetera. Let us make a bargain, Billy. You carry on, just as you have planned. Forget what I have said to-night. In the meantime find out, if you can, where she was in October, nineteen hundred and twenty. But," he went on earnestly, "promise me that you will come to me before you do anything rash. Don't, in any case, sign any paper, and don't, by all the gods, let her marry you when you are not looking!" He finished with a smile and Billy was impressed.

"Oh, you make me tired, Welles," he said inelegantly, "but, of course, I'll promise. That is easy."

Poor Billy went for his drive next morning with a queer feeling. It was a perfect day in late May. He was proud of his Daimler car and he was not usually given to doubts as to his own personal appearance and ability to "get by" on any ordinary occasion, and he had cause to be proud of the two ladies—their good looks, obvious good breeding, and smart apparel assured that. But—hang it all, why couldn't that old Nancy of a Welles let a fellow alone?

Out through Regent's Park they purred; around the oval; past St. Dunstan's with its blinded warriors; out the Avenue Road, through St. John's Wood, by many shady, winding roads to Harrow Weald. Up the steep hill to St. Mary's Church where the Harrow schoolboys chattered imperturbably as they climbed.

In the churchyard the ladies sat upon the flat stone and Billy flung himself

upon the grass under the cooling shade of Byron's elm, and they gazed off at the low panorama of tree-dotted greenery spread fanwise below them.

"You can see seven counties from here—or is it seventeen?" finished Billy with a grin. "I'm afraid I make a poor guide. I am never quite certain of my data."

However, it really was not uncertainty that was his present trouble, but certainty. The certainty that he'd got to find out where his companions were in October a year and a half ago. He was sure Welles would expect that information when he got back to town, and he must be able to refute Welles' statement of the previous day. One look at Elizabeth's clear eyes and calm self-possession showed she could not be the wrong un of the secret-service man's imagination. She had nothing to conceal; but he'd got to prove it to Welles.

Mrs. Merriwether obligingly gave him his opportunity when she rose and strolled away to read the inscriptions on the headstones bordering the shady pathway. Billy turned his back to the view and stood before Elizabeth.

"Miss Merriwether, you've got my goat," he said frankly; then, at her look of surprise, he laughed. "I beg your pardon—I'm puzzled. I've got to apologize. I—at first—I didn't remember where I had met you and your mother. You came up so suddenly, you know, I—I——"

He was floundering helplessly. Elizabeth's clear eyes were smiling.

"Yes, that first evening Mother and I saw you did not remember us, but it was very sporting of you to pretend. It saved our feelings, at any rate. Then we just kept on as a joke, to see how long it would take you to remember. We both knew you straightaway."

"Well, I do remember now where and when—exactly where and when."

Billy was suddenly very proud of his technique.

"Oh, that is clever of you, very clever!" she teased. "Tell me, please, exactly where—and—when."

"It was at Lady Duff-Mason's house party at Mansford Park near Dundee, in October, nineteen hundred and twenty." He spoke with clear precision and at her moment of silence he wondered if he had bungled it, after all.

"Wrong!" she said finally, with the air of a pretty schoolma'am. "I've never been in Scotland in my life, and as for October, nineteen twenty—let me think. Mother!" she called, and after a moment raised her lovely voice. "Mother! Where were we in October, nineteen twenty?"

Mrs. Merriwether continued her inspection of the age-worn headstones.

"I don't know," she answered absently, and then, as if trying to recall her wandering interest: "Oh, San Francisco, I think." She strolled back to them, her brows knit in the effort to recall. "Yes, October, a year ago, San Francisco. I am sure. Why?"

"I don't believe it was San Francisco," objected Elizabeth.

"Well, that is that much, anyway!" Billy caught himself saying irrelevantly and the women looked at him curiously.

"Mother, it's a good joke. Mr. Matthews has finally confessed he does not remember us."

"Oh, no!" said the young man hastily and in alarm. "I didn't say that, really, Mrs. Merriwether. I do remember you, both of you—did from the very first. But I didn't remember where—exactly." Billy's grin was pleading for him now.

"Well, does it matter where, Mr. Matthews? We have met again, very pleasantly, and, speaking for my daughter and myself, it has been delightful. Women traveling alone are often at a disadvantage. I think it will be rather interesting to make a game of it, just

to see how long it will last. Elizabeth and I might put forth every effort to keep it secret and you see if you can catch a clew. Is it a bargain? Shall we play it?" She put out her hand which Billy made haste to clasp and the younger woman laid hers upon them both.

"I'm game!" said Billy. "I am having the time of my life! Now, if we could only get something cold to drink!"

The woman laughed at his truly American notion of concluding a compact and they sauntered out of the shady churchyard, with its dominating, slender spire, into the glare of High Street.

"Well, it isn't Monte Carlo, at any rate," said Billy over and over to himself as they drove back to town. "San Francisco is a long, long way from Monte Carlo. That will settle Welles."

But when they got back to the Savoy it was not San Francisco.

"Come upstairs, Mr. Matthews. I am going to have a look at my diary. I don't believe it was San Francisco."

In the pleasant sitting room facing the garden and the river Elizabeth went to her desk and brought out a fat, red book.

"I believe this 'Line a Day for Five Years' is an American idea," she said as they seated themselves. She turned the leaves rapidly. "October, 'twenty. Oh, *Baltimore*, of course! Nineteen twenty—September, October. Of course, of course. We stayed out in the county. Don't you remember, Mother? A crowd went down from the Green Spring Valley Club to Havre de Grace to see Man o' War? I never saw such races, not even in Baden-Baden and they are very good." She handed Billy the book. "I thought it was not San Francisco."

"What beautiful writing!" said Billy as he gazed at the entries. "It is just like engraving."

"Yes, the mistresses worked hard

enough to make the girls write 'like ladies,' as they supposed." Then, a spirit of mischief springing to her brown eyes, she continued: "I can tell your fortune by your writing—the girls taught me that at school, not the mistresses."

"Oh, tell mine!" implored Billy as he seized a pen and wrote his name dashing across a sheet of hotel note paper from the desk—"W. Judson Matthews," flowing in one unmistakable word.

"Well, I should say you were romantic, generous, impulsive, and—yes—given to saying you remember people when you do not—especially ladies."

Whereupon the game ended in laughter and Billy took his smiling departure.

He stopped at the American embassy and asked for a file of Baltimore papers of the months under discussion. A cursory glance sufficed. Man o' War was spread on every page.

"Welles has jolly well got to eat crow," he thought, mixing his American and English idioms hopelessly. Nevertheless, Welles did. He apologized. When Matthews, seeing his advantage, pursued it and stretched the truth by saying he had met them in New York, Welles was very humble and apologized again.

"Just snowed him under, by Gemini!" boasted Billy to himself, feeling he had settled discussion for all time, but he did not like the look in Welles' eyes as he turned back to his everlasting heap of cipher telegrams.

There followed pleasant days for Billy, now almost constantly in the company of the mother and daughter, "whom he had met in New York." There was tea at Rumpelmayer's, the Chelsea Flower Show. There were drives to Oxford and Stratford, tea again, and the theaters.

Obviously the women played the game suggested in Harrow churchyard—to remember or not to remember—as

agreed, but Billy did not, and by none of the three was a previous acquaintance ever again mentioned. Apparently all were willing enough to let bygones go and date their beginnings from the evening at the Academy door.

The only fly in the ointment for the young man was his old friend Welles. What ailed him, anyway? He said nothing, beyond refusing to meet them or have his name mentioned, but Billy felt he must prove to him they were not the type of women he had asserted they were. One had only to be in their company for an hour; only to observe the well-bred calm of the mother; only to look into the clear eyes of Elizabeth and to listen to her lovely voice, to be convinced.

The ladies moved from the Savoy to a smaller hotel in a quiet West End neighborhood and were apparently preparing for a prolonged stay in London. They seemed to know no one, were no doubt well supplied with money, at least there was never any mention of funds, in any way.

There was no effort to capture him. Who was he, anyway, he thought indignantly. Only a plain American youth with plenty of money and native good looks, to be sure, but green and inexperienced when thrown in the society of women who had obviously spent their lives in travel, the best hotels, and good society all over the world.

He knew he was going to fall in love with Elizabeth. He had suspected it almost from the first; then he began to know it. The knowledge, of course, was tempered with fear and uncertainty. Fear that she would not take him seriously. "Who was he, anyway?" he repeated over and over. Uncertainty as to Welles' attitude. Good old Welles—he had been a brick. No nagging, no questioning, only once the earnest reminder of Billy's promise not to mention his name and to come to him before "getting in too deep."

So, being a man of his word, when he felt he could not keep silent much longer he went to Welles.

"I am keeping my promise to you, Welles"—Billy hoped to maintain a light, but firm, tone throughout—"I promised to come to you before I 'did anything rash,' I believe you called it, about Miss Merriwether. I want you to release me from any further need of reporting."

"Reporting?" Welles looked up quickly from his telegrams and Billy knew he had hurt him. "I hoped I was not being a prying nuisance, boy."

Billy's defenses went down.

"Oh, Welles, I wish I could make you know how I feel. I know—you've proved it in a thousand ways—you *are* my friend, my true friend. But can you not realize you are mistaken? Why, Elizabeth was never in Monte Carlo, I asked her, offhand, one day, when we were talking about gaming."

"Billy, I must make one more appeal. Of course, I can be mistaken. I have been scores of times, and when I am there is no one quicker to acknowledge it. *This time I am not mistaken.*"

"Oh!" cried Billy, aghast, but Welles went on.

"She was in Monte Carlo at that time, I tell you. She was not Elizabeth Merriwether, then, but Rhoda Gilchrist. Beresford, now"—Welles tapped a telegram—"he knew her and she knows him. She doesn't know me, never saw or heard of me, I dare say. I kept out of sight."

"Then how could you be so cocksure that she is the same woman?" Billy was quick to see the foolishness of Welles' argument.

"I was billeted with the St. Dunstan boys in Monte Carlo. Had a bandage and dark glasses. It is a fine disguise, though secret-service men do not go in for disguise—we're not spies, you know. But in this case it helped, for I wanted to be strictly incog. Rhoda Gilchrist

10—Ains.

used to come to read to us as we sat in our wheel chairs, 'poor blinded Tommies, I'd do anything for dear old England'—working for her own ends, damn her, against poor Ferguson."

Welles' gaze was fixed on space and his fine face was tense. He seemed not to notice the effect of his words upon Billy, who had grown scarlet with rage.

"Look here, Welles, you can't—" he began.

"She read to me twice before she—er—died. I tell you, boy, I should know that woman in Tibet, with her face veiled. If the women there veil their faces. I don't know. She can play the ingénue, and I am willing to take off my hat to her background. Educated on the Continent—Paris and Dresden, Vienna and Rome. I wager she has Yankee blood, too, for she has their cleverness, and she is beautiful. That combination offers rare potentialities, either for good or evil. And she has used her powers.

"I don't want to tell you what happened down there at Monte Carlo, Billy, unless she tries her tricks on you. I am quite inclined to your view. You are not a statesman; you don't know any valuable secrets and you are not—charming as you are—influential. To be perfectly frank, and that is equivalent to being brutal, I think she is amusing herself with you until some bigger fish swims into her ken."

"Thanks awfully for your opinion of me, Welles! I hope you know I would not take this from another man under the sun, and I am trying not to be angry with you because I know you believe every word you say. I know you think me a poor simp, but I am twenty-four and I've steered clear of trouble so far."

"So far you have not been thrown with one of the cleverest women in Europe, and one of the most beautiful. When I remember poor Ferguson—"

"What is all this rot about Ferguson?"

You've said 'Poor Ferguson, poor Ferguson!' until I am tired of his name."

"It is not a pretty story and there is no use in spoiling your little holiday, messing up your young mind, unless something sinister demands it. It is true, you are twenty-four, Billy, and you are like my own son. Before——"

"I know I am an awful kid compared with you, and I feel as green as new grass—but I am trying to live it down," he protested, with the grin the older man loved, and Welles knew that, for this time, the battle was won.

"Let us thank God you *are* a kid, a clean one. I should hate to have anything ugly come to you. I would kill any man with my own hands before I would allow your life to be ruined as was Ferguson's. I say, Billy, you mention Brizzy to them. Algernon Monteville Beresford, to be exact, big and blond, twenty-nine and wears an eyeglass. That is all. You will see what happens. You will believe me then. She has just cause to remember Brizzy."

"And if she doesn't know him, never heard of him?" Billy's faith was dying hard.

"If you can prove to me that she never knew Beresford, I will give you my blessing. And I hope to Heaven you can."

And once more Billy set forth to clear the name of Elizabeth Merriwether, feeling in these days much like the shuttlecock in the old game of battledore, as he went flying from one friend to another. His feelings, too, his emotional states, varied from complete belief and confidence when he was with the two ladies, to the faint doubt that assailed him in the effort to make Welles see and believe as he did when he was with the latter.

The pleasant days held and next week was Ascot. Billy and the Daimler were to be at the disposal of Mrs. Merriwether and Elizabeth for those golden

days. He was sure he had the approval of the mother, he was sure of his regard and confidence in the daughter, and he knew that she liked him. It was only Welles, and his misguided belief in that Monte Carlo ghost, that deterred him.

But Welles had been a second father to him and he was bound by ties of love and affection, of confidence and gratitude. Welles was an honest man, a fair man. Never had he taken so firm a stand on any subject without good and sufficient cause. And he knew that Welles loved him. "I'd kill any man with my own hands before I would allow your life to be ruined," he had said. There had been a woman in Monte Carlo. Billy believed that. He also believed Welles thought Elizabeth to be that woman. But his own heart of faith knew it could not be.

Welles must be convinced. This Beresford matter must be the test. If they knew Beresford, he would face them with Ferguson and tell Welles that he had won. If not, Welles must be made to meet them and receive Elizabeth as the woman he loved.

Billy was having tea with the ladies in the Merriwether suite. Final plans had been made for Ascot and all were relaxed.

"Oh, by the way, I heard from Beresford to-day. 'Brizzy,' they call him. I'd never heard him called that until I came here. I told him about you, Miss Merriwether, and he says he knows you." He was feeling in his pockets as if for a letter, but gave it up when he couldn't find it. He was completely ashamed of his lie, but the shadow of Welles stood in the background and he tried to ease his conscience by "All's fair in love and war," the "end justifies the means," and other platitudes.

"Beresford? Where did I know him?" Elizabeth showed only casual interest.

"He didn't say where. Algernon Monteville Beresford, big blond chap, wears an eyeglass. He's older than I am, probably nearly thirty." Parrotlike, he could only repeat Welles' description.

"Beresford? Mother, do we know any Beresfords?" the girl asked, turning calmly to Mrs. Merriwether.

"I know some Beresfords in America," she answered, with equal calm. "It may be one of the boys, there are several, I believe."

"No, this chap is English—oh, very English. He is due home next week, from Monte Carlo. He is a great tennis player. You must meet him. You will probably remember him."

"Next week?" There was no alarm in Mrs. Merriwether's voice, only the slightest, most perfunctory interest in any friend of Mr. Matthews.

"The fifteenth, he said," Billy replied, and then they talked of other things.

Back the shuttlecock went to Welles, triumphantly this time, for he was sure the elder man would be convinced.

"Well, that ought to start something, as you would say," was Welles' comment.

"But I tell you they do *not* know him. I even stooped to watching their hands. You know you said——"

"So I did, but that will betray only the veriest tyro at dissembling. Why, don't you know that the experienced criminal, or any person who knows he has cause to be watched, is always on guard, always suave, never more so than when he thinks he is in no immediate danger? Women like that Rhoda Gilchrist I told you of could play the secret-service game—and do—to our undoing sometimes. Now that notebook idea is a new one to me, but it is clever. Just put down all the details of everyday life in some place where you are *not*, then when you need an alibi—*voilà!*"

"I notice you say Rhoda Gilchrist and not Merriwether," said Billy,

choosing to ignore the diary reference entirely, for the present. He had a large score to wipe off with Welles later. In the meantime he must keep his temper. He was in difficulties. He loved and believed in Elizabeth, but he also loved and believed in Welles.

"Yes, I will give her the benefit of the doubt as long as she can steer clear. But something will happen inside of two days."

But when it did Billy was not convinced—at first.

Billy was waiting for the post the next morning when Mrs. Merriwether asked to speak to him over the telephone. Elizabeth had had a bad night and was feeling wretchedly and asked to be excused from the drive they had planned for the afternoon. No, she was sure it was nothing to cause worry, just a slight chill, then a bit of temperature. She would be quite all right to-morrow, and wouldn't Mr. Matthews call them up then? He was a dear to be so considerate about the afternoon. To-morrow, then. Good-by.

"What did I tell you?" asked Welles triumphantly, as Billy turned from the telephone.

"My heavens, can't a woman have a headache without your rejoicing?" Billy was disgusted. The secret service certainly took all of the human out of a man. Everybody was a criminal.

The next day when Billy called at the hotel he did not see Elizabeth. Mrs. Merriwether looked worried and there were dark circles about her eyes. Her daughter was worse, much worse. They had had a doctor in; they were afraid it would develop into pneumonia. She had a very high temperature with occasional delirium. Billy advised a nursing home and wanted to take the burden of affairs from the mother. But no—she didn't want her daughter moved. She wanted to be with her her every minute. The doctor was very good. She didn't know his name, the

hotel management had sent him. The hotel people were so very kind and sympathetic.

Mrs. Merriwether said she was so worried she could not be polite. Would he be good enough not to call again until she should send for him? He was a dear. Good-by!

Billy was worried and he was glad that Welles had been called unexpectedly to the Midlands and would be gone for a couple of days. He was in no mood to have Welles to face.

Billy sent flowers and inquired by telephone. Elizabeth was worse; pneumonia in both lungs and they had two nurses and were doing everything. The next day she was better in the morning and his spirits rose. At night she had collapsed and was dangerously ill. Billy tramped the streets of the West End until morning. He felt the earth rocking under his feet and was distinctly relieved to learn that Welles would be home early that day. He left word for Welles to come to his flat at once.

As early as he dared he called the Merriwether apartment, but he could get no response. The telephone operator knew nothing of Miss Merriwether's condition, she had just come on duty. No, the manager had not come down yet.

Desperate, Billy was just starting for the hotel when Welles came in. He was visibly shocked by Billy's appearance, but his sympathy extended no further than Billy.

"Are you absolutely heartless, Welles?" he asked pitifully.

"No, I am not, boy. But this business has got to end."

"She is going to die. I know she is. And I believe you——"

"She is going to die, all right. But not the way you think. Don't look so mystified, Billy. I think, by putting two and two together—— By the way, old chap," he questioned anxiously, "you haven't signed any paper, have you?"

"Of course not!" snapped Billy irritably.

"Well, I think it is Mother's next move. She won't be long now," he added in the English idiom Billy loathed.

And she wasn't!

She came in close upon the heels of the servant who announced her. She was dressed in black, and veiled. To Billy's quick inquiry for Elizabeth, she only shook her head. She was plainly excited, but held herself in hand as one who is in sorrow, but has stern business before her. She acknowledged Welles' presence with a courteous bow and asked to speak to Billy alone.

Welles saw that she did not recognize him and he made great ado about letting himself out—rather noisily, Billy thought resentfully. As soon as they were alone Mrs. Merriwether turned from the window.

"I came to tell you, Mr. Matthews, that Elizabeth is dead—died early this morning," she said with great self-restraint.

"Oh, Mrs. Merriwether!" Poor Billy was really aghast. The mocking prophecy of Welles did not occur to him.

"I cannot realize it!" There were no heroics, only the intense calm of a very real grief. "I felt from the first there was no hope. I seemed to know it, some way. That is why I would not allow her to be taken to a nursing home, why I could not bear to see any one else, not even you. I wanted to spend every moment with her alone. She is all I have had for so many years. I am anxious to get off on the night boat, if I can, and take her back to France. That is why I came to see you so early, without an appointment."

"This is not a time for ceremony, Mrs. Merriwether. Why have you not allowed me to help? You have needed a man. It—it is dreadful for you to have gone through such a time alone,

with no friends in England." How he did long for Welles; he would know just how to help her, to comfort her. After all, there was nothing like experience at such times of trouble. He wanted to help her, but how? She seemed to have been able to do so much alone.

And then came the thunderbolt!

"And that is why I must have the money, to-day. This morning would be better. There have been so many expenses."

"The money? I can let you have some, to-day, if you need it, certainly. I haven't much with me this morning." He was glad there was something he could do. He could get whatever she needed by afternoon. He felt for his wallet.

"I do not want to borrow, Mr. Matthews. It is the money Elizabeth let you have. She rallied, only last night——"

"Money—Elizabeth let me have money?" His hand was stayed in his pocket.

"The six thousand pounds she asked you to bank for us, Mr. Matthews. English banking is so strange to us." Her voice was of an infinite patience. Poor boy, he was so overcome by the girl's death he was slow of comprehension. "I have the receipt here."

"Good heavens!" groaned Billy as he watched her trembling hand search her bag. Welles' warning rang in his ears. "Don't sign any paper." Well, he had not—that was flat!

But she was handing him a folded paper. He looked at it stupidly. There was his name written dashingly across a sheet of Savoy note paper—"W. Judson Matthews"—flowing in one unmis-takable word! It was genuine enough, he could not deny that.

And above his signature was written in the girl's copybook hand: "Received of E. Merriwether the sum of six

thousand pounds, sterling, for safe keeping."

"Nearly thirty thousand dollars," he said half aloud, as he looked at the paper dully. The date was that of the trip to Harrow churchyard—the fortune-telling game came to his mind. He *had* been a fool; in spite of Welles' repeated warnings he had been a fool! Well, his father hadn't made his money in Wall Street without leaving some inheritance of fighting qualities in his son!

"Mrs. Merriwether——" he began pleasantly, and the woman gave a genuine sigh of relief. After all, the ninny hadn't a vestige of fight in him. That was well.

Then it was that Welles' quiet voice broke in upon them. They had not heard him return.

"Sorry to disturb you again, Matthews, but a very important message has just come for you. I am sure, madam"—he turned to the woman with his courteous bow—"will pardon us if I ask you to read it at once."

Billy could not but admire Mrs. Merriwether's wonderful composure as she returned Welles' bow, and waited quietly. He still held the first paper, and he spread the other upon it and read in Welles' familiar hand:

My man has been watching their hotel for three days. No illness, no nurse, no death. I, myself, trailed Elizabeth to the Midlands two days ago. Booked for Liverpool last night and telegraphed for passage to Cherbourn. She's sound and well.

The events of the past moments added to a night of sleepless worry had slowed Billy's usually quick mind. The world was a blank, his faith and confidence tottering about him, as he stared at the papers. He did not know how long it was until he was conscious of Welles' voice in quiet cadence as if he had been talking for some minutes. Mrs. Merriwether was listening constrainedly.

"—experience I had in Monte Carlo once." Welles was at his best when he was telling a story. "It was in—let me see—nineteen hundred and twenty. October of that year. The little principality was full of all sorts of people. Beside the accredited representatives of stable governments there was much political refuse. Discredited secret-service agents from all sorts of countries, spies, adventurers, and traitors of every description.

"The pity of it was that preying upon all these, as well as upon honest folk, was an army of women, women young and old, houris and harpies, charming and horrible. The most beautiful and appealing of them all was a young woman, Rhoda Gilchrist—did you speak, Mrs. Merriwether? I beg your pardon, I thought you said something."

Billy stole a look at Mrs. Merriwether. That look would have told him nothing. She was the embodiment of a grief-stricken mother, trying in a bewildered way to listen to the vaporings of a harmless bore. Welles continued his narrative.

"There was an older woman with Miss Gilchrist; her mother, they claimed. But the daughter was the active member of the family. They were Austrians, they said, out of their country partly because of the political upheaval and partly as a protest against her having gone in with Germany against England.

"These women, the Gilchrists, went about with a group of people from the same country, holding the same views. None of them dared go back until things were settled. They called themselves the 'Young Austrians' and were working for an alliance with France and England, against the old régime.

"She could quote names and dates, Rhoda could. Knew Vienna and the big toads like a book, I will say that for her. I was not there at first," he said, with a cherubic smile at the wo-

man, "but Beresford was, and poor old Ferguson."

Billy looked for some sort of expression from Mrs. Merriwether at mention of these names, but there was not the ghost of a sign. She only looked unutterably, but politely, bored.

"Ferguson was mad about her, I have said she was charming, and she played him for all she could get. He actually paid their bills and gave them pocket money, in addition. Instead of doing what England expected of her servants, he spent all his time pulling her chestnuts out of the fire. That was why I happened to be sent down—first to see what ailed Ferguson's reports, and finally to finish his tasks.

"She was the real leader and brains of the Young Austrians and they were trying to float a huge loan. England wasn't loaning any money, just then, not even to purchase her old enemies, and, by the way, I very much doubt that the organization would have got the money had Rhoda been successful! Be that as it may, however, Ferguson had an idea he could get it from the Morgans. But things hung fire, something went wrong, and the gang took fright.

"Well, not to seem tedious, the girl died, got killed conveniently, in a motor smash up La Turbie way. It is a bad road down to the town from there with a wicked turn by the cemetery. She started down one night alone. We proved that, all right. A few hours later her machine was found smashed, with what her mother said was her body, in her clothes, under it. Everybody went to her funeral—she was buried in that same cemetery, half a mile above Monte Carlo, where so many poor wretches have ended after coming a cropper in the little principality.

"Ferguson was out of his head. Brizzy told me he had never seen a man so cut up. But he sobered when the old lady presented her bill, in a way of

speaking. She said she had found a paper among Rhoda's effects, signed by Ferguson, proving that he had been working against his own office here in London and that he had borrowed large sums of money from the Young Austrians, 'on account.' He was off his head about the girl and he *had* been neglecting his work, but I can prove that Ferguson was straight as a die.

"The paper was a palpable fake, but in desperation he bought off the old woman, actually begged himself, and then went up and blew his brains out on the grave where Rhoda was *not* buried. We also proved that, later."

Billy had sat as if petrified throughout the recital—"flabbergasted," he described his state later—and Mrs. Merriwether was unmoved, but restive.

She gathered herself for departure when there was a break in the steady flow of words, seemingly forgetting the purpose for which she had come and ignoring Welles' story entirely.

"Well, Mr. Matthews, you have been so kind to us. I thank you for it. You have my address, I know. I shall look forward to seeing you in Paris, soon."

Billy had forgotten his manners and sat staring. Welles joined her.

"So long, Billy. Mrs. Merriwether is going; I must run, too. Save the lift man a trip." And then, as an afterthought: "Oh, what I really dropped in for was to say that our men expected to pick up Rhoda Gilchrist, you know her as Elizabeth Merriwether, at Queenstown, this morning."

"Elizabeth? Arrested? For what?" Mrs. Merriwether's voice rasped.

"Oh, did I say arrested. hateful word. I dislike it very much. 'Picked up' is our euphemism for that. What for, you ask? For that little escapade in Cairo, my dear lady," he explained playfully, drawing her resisting hand through his arm. "England isn't going to countenance your efforts to establish a new khedive in Egypt, just yet. So

you came under the scrutiny of my humble department, 'the great and only British secret service,' Billy once called it."

"Mr. Matthews, must I appeal to you? Are you going to permit——"

"This nonsense might as well stop just here, madam." Welles' usually placid tones were now the whiplash. "My men are below with a taxi. That is better. Come quietly, thank you." Down through the corridor Billy heard his voice, bantering again: "England isn't always napping when she looks sleepy, my dear Mrs. Merriwether."

The lift door snapped like the click of a handcuff and Billy sat looking at two slips of paper. Across the face of the one Mrs. Merriwether had given him he wrote the words "Paid in full." Then he tore them both in tiny bits.

Mr. and Mrs. William Judson Matthews were on their honeymoon and had got as far as Paris. She was a beautiful American girl, simple and unaffected, and as they were having an ice in Sherry's he admired anew her unspoiled freshness.

Suddenly there came from a table behind him the unmistakable cool and charming voice of her he had known in London.

"Yes, Mr. Jarvis, people say my English is very good for a Frenchwoman. I've never been in England, you know. But I adore the Englishmen!"

"Oh, what a lovely woman!" cried Mrs. Billy as the charming voice passed the Matthews' table. "I always feel so green beside these European women. They look so poised and clever."

"My dear," answered Billy, laying a hand warmly over hers upon the table, "I would not give that little finger of yours for ten thousand of the loveliest and cleverest women in Europe!"

And from the look in his eyes and the earnest tones of his voice Mrs. Billy knew that her husband spoke the truth.

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The Love Guard

By Freeman Harrison



AS Jean Chrystie watched carelessly the shimmering yellow stars of the rose-scented July night, she thought with a pleasing little shudder that before another hour passed she would promise to marry either Paul Hemmingway or Alan Bell. The bronze-haired Jean, after putting them off many times, had told each that he might expect an answer to-night, when the Randolph Platts were giving a dance at their Cliffwood summer home.

The lissom Jean, who was twenty-two, loved the whole world, which was more or less at her feet. To her life was beautiful beyond expression. She was the only daughter of Harold F. Chrystie, known in Wall Street as the King of Oil, and the financier indulged extravagantly the whims of the satin-cheeked girl. Jean frankly adored the things that money could buy—and so far in life she had got them.

Of course, they were at the Platt dance—the handsome, dashing Hemmingway and Alan Bell, he of the long brown hair and dreamy hazel eyes. And Jean, in the rustic summerhouse, to which she had fled after dancing a while in the colorful ballroom, knew that the two would seek her out. Probably Hemmingway, she thought, would find her first; he didn't dream as much as Alan Bell, who was a poet.

After his graduation from Dartmouth, where his specialty had been football, Hemmingway had become a member of his father's business firm in New York. And the striking, black-haired young man was a valuable member, for he had almost uncanny business acumen. Whether gold or

Jean came first with him probably he himself could not have said.

Alan Bell, on the other hand, worshipped the Muses—and Jean. He loved beauty, and in the svelte, bronze-haired girl he found it beyond all measure; hers was the exquisite physical perfection of which Marlowe and Byron, his favorite poets, had sung. What she possessed or lacked of keen intellect or soul troubled Bell little, overwhelmed as he was by her fresh, pulsating beauty.

Not especially wealthy, the Bells nevertheless belonged. Alan's ancestors may have missed the *Mayflower* at the wharf, but they must have taken the next boat over, for they were on hand early. Most of the male Bells went to Harvard and were graduated; Alan, of the dreamy, hazel eyes and an entrancing stoop to his shoulders, went to Yale—and stayed part of a college year. The campus life bored him, and he was too restless to remain longer. After quitting New Haven one sunshiny April afternoon, when the fresh, seductive aroma of the awakening spring was in the air, he went to New York to take up the profession of being a poet; in reality he had been one since he first saw the moon and the stars.

The lilting strains of music from the Platt home reached Jean as she sat in the little summerhouse. Below her was the Hudson, a grayish, winding stretch against a background of dark, shadowy mountains. A path led toward the river and another toward the gayly lighted mansion.

The girl started suddenly as she heard footsteps close by, but she did not look toward the entrance of the summerhouse. The time for decision had come.

she thought. How fascinating the dreamy, romantic Alan was! How divinely he stooped! And yet what a high place in the business world Paul Hemmingway had already carved for himself.

The girl turned suddenly. Some one whom she did not know was standing by her—a tall woman dressed in white and beautiful as the hazy, yellow stars were beautiful. She was not young, yet Jean thought that her hair was golden.

"You are in love," the elder woman challenged the girl. There was no suggestion of doubt. The strange woman's voice was like sweet music heard across summer seas.

"If I am it doesn't concern you," Jean said crisply, with all the flippancy of youth. "I do not know you. Please go away," she ended.

"Perhaps it would be better for you if I stayed. I, too, have been in love, and my experience with it might perhaps help you."

"Your experience won't help me." Jean spoke softly now; she was beginning to feel a mysterious influence coming from the unknown visitor. "No other woman has been in a situation like mine."

"Are you quite sure, my dear?" the woman asked coaxingly. "Tell me about it."

Jean hesitated. Then, as if seized by an irresistible force, she said:

"I am loved by a poet and by a young business man. I have promised each of them an answer to-night."

The other's eyes shone brilliantly in the starlight. "Tell me your story—quick!"

The piercing look of the other woman upon her, Jean told volubly of Alan Bell, the dreamy maker of verses, and of Hemmingway, the maker of money. Unhesitatingly she told her name to the stranger, who said that she was Mrs. Weatherly.

"Paul Hemmingway is wonderful at making money," Jean said ingenuously. "He's well thought of in financial circles in New York. Why, everything that he touches turns to gold. And Alan, he doesn't care a fig for money; more than that, he actually scorns it and says that there should be no such a thing in the world. Imagine!"

Jean went on garrulously, the older woman confining herself merely to a question now and then. The girl became more and more confidential. She began at last to talk of the trifles women will speak of to one another when the lights of the earth are low. Jean felt that she always had known the tall, compelling woman by her side.

Then, returning to the inevitable subject of Paul Hemmingway and the poet, she of the bronze hair told of a brown-eyed young woman who taught in a woman's college farther up the Hudson. Alan Bell had been fond of her, Jean admitted, trying to smile, and had written several sonnets about her. But all that had happened before he met Jean. The other's name was Margot Cowl.

After subtle provocation from the golden-haired woman, who was patently trying to draw the girl out, they turned to the subject of books.

"I've just finished Merlin Dunn's latest serial," Jean said enthusiastically. "The hero is too wonderful for anything; I rave about him."

"I have read the story," Mrs. Weatherly said. "Do you care for Eliot or Thackeray or Conrad, Miss Chrystie?"

"No. In boarding school I had to read some of them. They are terribly stupid and silly—just like the poetry Alan is forever quoting. It doesn't mean anything."

"What is some of the verse your poet quotes?"

"Oh, for one thing," Jean replied, "he's always speaking some lines that I think he says Browning wrote—posi-

tively ridiculous stuff about some dead women in Venice who had golden hair. I don't see much to that, do you, Mrs. Weatherly?"

"Are these the lines you mean?" asked the woman.

"Dear dead women, with such hair, too—
What's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I
Feel chilly and grown old."

"Yes; that's it. Any one could write that kind of stuff!"

"Yet only two or three Anglo-Saxons have written it, Miss Chrystie," said Mrs. Weatherly.

Abruptly Jean broke off, as if it suddenly had come to her that the woman in white had guided the conversation from the first.

"I can't understand why I've told you all the things I have," she said. "Why, I don't really know; it's been silly of me. When you came you said that you would help me, but you've told me nothing. You know my story—now tell me yours."

For the moment, Jean, her eyes blazing, seemed to command the situation.

A reddish-yellow moon began to throw its magic beams through the trees. The woman began wistfully.

"I, too, was loved by a poet—and by a man who turned everything that he touched to gold. I——"

"Why, how strange, Mrs. Weatherly!" the girl interrupted. "How wonderfully odd! And what was the poet's name?"

"His name was—Alan."

"You're making fun of me, Mrs. Weatherly," the girl accused. "You're mocking me! I suppose the other's name was Paul?"

"No, it was John." The tall, beautiful woman spoke quietly, but with great emotion. "I lived in England then—in a Sussex village. The poet was poor. He thought nothing of money; he scorned it. And the other had gold and tall ships and two estates

in Kent. To him money and the things that money buys meant everything. And I—I——"

"You don't have to tell me, Mrs. Weatherly," Jean cried, interrupting. "I know what you did, oh, I'm sure I know! You married the man with the gold and the ships and the estates in Kent."

"Yes."

"And you weren't happy. I know you weren't. Oh, I'm so sorry, Mrs. Weatherly!"

"Would it make any difference in the decision you're going to make tonight if I should tell you whether I was happy?" The woman's shining eyes burned themselves into the very soul of Jean.

"Yes," the girl answered softly. "Somehow I think that what you tell me will influence my decision. It's silly of me, I know; but I think it will."

The other woman paused for an instant. Then she said slowly, impressively:

"With John Weatherly I was the happiest wife in the world."

Jean sat dazed, while Mrs. Weatherly put her arm about her, kissed her flushed cheek, and then quickly left the summerhouse. It seemed to the bronze-haired girl that something vital had gone out of her life forever; that a beautiful dream had been shattered.

And then she heard some one enter the summerhouse. She turned to see Paul Hemmingway standing beside her, his black, silky hair carefully parted and glistening. He was handsome and buoyant with the zest of life. The fragrant Egyptian cigarette he was smoking burned yellowish red in the magic moonlight that silvered the summerhouse and caused myriads of tiny flames to dance and caper on the surface of the river below.

"Why, Jean," Hemmingway exclaimed, "you look so strange! What's the trouble? Tell me!"

"There's nothing the matter, Paul." The girl spoke reassuringly. Then she said: "How glad I am you've come, dear!"

Hemmingway started at her words.

"You mean that, Jean?"

"Yes." The note of surrender was unmistakable.

Madly he took her into his arms, crushing the warm, rose-leaf cheeks and the masses of soft bronze hair against him. He pressed his lips against hers that were yielding and red with the flame of love. Jean was to be his forever. To her he would bring his love and all of the things that money can buy.

The eyes of love are all for the loved one. Otherwise Jean and Paul Hemmingway, some time before they left, might have seen a slender youth with slightly stooped shoulders and a lazy, indifferent walk approach the summer-house. They would have seen him pause for a moment, then turn back across the moonlit lawns.

Late one snowy December afternoon, about two years after his marriage, Paul Hemmingway motored up-

town to his home on Eighty-sixth Street, New York. His wife, unusually beautiful and animated, met him in the ornate, softly lighted hallway. Her bronze hair glistened like some magic golden urn in the last rays of a setting sun. She held in her hand what looked to be an engraved announcement.

"What do you think, Paul?" she said. "Alan Bell and Margot Cowl were married yesterday."

"That's interesting, Jean."

"Yes—very interesting." Then, with a woman's subtlety, she managed to change the subject.

Later that evening, before Jean left for the opera and when her husband was absorbed in reflections over a strenuous day on the Street, she asked in an offhand fashion:

"Did you ever hear of a Mrs. Weatherly, Paul?"

"Mrs. Weatherly? Let me think. The name sounds familiar. Why, yes, Jean; I remember her. For a short time she lived near Woodcliff. They say she came from England when her wealthy husband, with whom she had always lived unhappily, threw her over for another woman."



A MODERN LOVE SONG

NO matter how you love me
Or what you have to give,
I shall know your spirit
Always fugitive.

No matter how I love you
And crave your claiming hand,
I shall be a rebel
Hard to understand.

Love me when you want love.
When you will, be free.
If you go a-roving
Leave my soul with me!

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING.



In Broadway Playhouses

By
Dorothy Parker

Let 'er Go

WITH four good loud opening guns to start it, the new season is off in a cloud of dust. "Whispering Wires," at the Forty-ninth Street Theater, has the distinction of being the first play to get under way. And a very nice arrangement it is, too. For, Heaven knows, "Whispering Wires" needs any distinction that it can get.

As they usually are, along around this time of year, "Whispering Wires" is a mystery play. The murdered man meets his death in an intriguing and novel manner, which the management asks its customers, as a personal favor, not to reveal to possible future audiences. It remains a secret, chummily shared by those who have seen the play and the four or five million who read it in its original form as a *Saturday Evening Post* story a year or so ago. It has been dramatized by Kate McLaurin, who may or may not be remembered—probably the latter—as the author of "The Six Fifty," one of those things about the wife who gets sick of living on the farm.

Montgomery Stockbridge, the murderer, is a rich man—oh, a terribly rich man. One might say, at a rough guess, that he is about the richest man in the world. He has a dim-lit library with suits of armor, reproductions of early

Italian furniture, artificial American-beauty roses, and a bust of Emerson—just the place for a murder. All disagreeable millionaires ought to keep out of their libraries, if they wish to retain their health. They are always found there, a crumpled hulk on the floor, a Thing that was once a man. Never, in a mystery play or a detective story, does a murdered man meet his end in the butler's pantry or the bathroom or the front hall. The library is the place where he gets his.

A hard man, too, *Stockbridge*—hard and cold. He makes enemies, not friends—to take the words out of his mouth, he "inspires hate." The local prisons, you gather from the expositional conversations, are crammed with men who are yearning to break out and get just one good crack at him. Countless men whom he had ruined in "that flying-boat deal" think only of revenge. Practically everybody in the cast is sore at him. He has words with the footman, he dismisses his daughter's suitor from the house, he ruined the life of his secretary's beau, he is none too pleasant to his lawyer. Almost anybody in the company would have a perfectly splendid reason for murdering him. And as you watch the way that Ben Johnson plays *Stockbridge's* rôle, you have the comforting feeling that even

if nobody on the stage murders him some person or persons in the audience will.

It is but fair to say for "Whispering Wires" that the last half of the first act is decidedly thrilling. *Stockbridge* receives an anonymous letter stating that his grave in Ridgewood has been dug and is waiting for him. To buoy him up after that comes a whispered telephone message that he will be dead in two hours, and nothing can save him. The house is filled with detectives, the entrances are guarded, all the windows are watched—it is, in a word, great. Yet, in spite of all the precautions, he is murdered. And if you do not guess how it is done, it is doubtful if you will ever be a success in business. I took a nasty spill while coasting, in my youth, landing squarely on the base of the skull. Since that time, I have never been able to answer a conundrum, fathom a card trick, or guess the finish of a detective story. But even I worked out the *Stockbridge* mystery with virtually no outside assistance.

After the dirty deed is done, however, "Whispering Wires" is pretty fairly flat. All there is left for the playwright and the actors to do is to fill in the time until eleven o'clock. They do it by means of false clues, heavy emotional acting, and some of the dullest comedy yet displayed on the American stage. The company, headed by Miss Olive Tell, who speaks distinctly, almost never forgets about broadening her a's, and has very beautiful feet and ankles, acts violently every minute of the time. The only member of the cast who seems to have any idea of getting a natural touch into the proceedings is Miss Gaby Fleury, in the rôle of a French maid.

It may here be said, for the benefit of the gun-shy who attend "Whispering Wires," that the shots in the first and last act aren't so terrible, being mercifully, though unconvincingly, done off

stage. But the two shots in the second act are devils.

The trouble with Miss McLaurin's play is the trouble that all mystery plays seem to share—once the crime has been committed there is really nothing to do until it is time to go home. It is perhaps mere idle dreaming, but one cannot help but hope that some day somebody will write a mystery play in which the murdered person will be a delightful character, so generally beloved that even the audience will take some interest in discovering who did it. In the usual mystery story the only reason for finding the murderer is that he may be presented with a bouquet.

And perhaps, some time, there will be a murder play in which suspicion is directed at some one to whom all the evidence points, some one who had every cause to do the deed. And in the last act it will turn out that that person was the one who really did do it. But no—that would revolutionize the drama!

We were saying, in a friendly way, just a few moments ago, that a part of "Whispering Wires" is markedly thrilling. But the creepiest moments of "Whispering Wires" are as the pattering of raindrops on a tin roof compared to even the calmest stretches of "The Monster." "The Bat," yes, even "The Cat and the Canary," are but little lullabies compared to "The Monster." I can't really think of anything I ever saw that could be compared to "The Monster." Ham it may be, if you insist, but, oh, ladies and gentleman, what a truly grand show! The strange gentleman seated next to me will bear to his grave the marks I left upon him when I clutched him in a frenzy of terror during the close of the second act. Heaven only knows how he laughed off those feminine finger prints when he got home to his wife.

"The Monster" is described, in its electric lights, as "a merry melodrama," and the boy who called it that must have

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a perfectly dandy sense of humor. The plot—of course, this is just a rough idea—concerns a maniacal surgeon who lures people to his lonely house that he may vivisect them. The curtain rises on the last act to disclose the heroine strapped to an operating table with the mad doctor hovering greedily over her, the while his giant Nubian servant, whose tongue has been cut out that he may not tell the things he has seen, plunges shining scalpels into the sterilizer to make them ready for their purpose. The hero, too, is there, but you see he really can't do much in the way of helping, because he is fastened into an electric chair, writhing in agony from the volts he has received. Yes, "merry" is *le mot juste*.

But before things get to this gay pass even more horrible events have occurred. Indeed, there is not a moment when something horrible is not occurring, including the comedy relief. Doors swing silently open without human hand, terrible faces appear, people vanish into walls and through floors, gruesome black hands reach out from nowhere, blood-curdling shrieks resound from dark corridors, a terrible creature, legless and faceless, prowls about—oh, boy! I don't say that there are not many tricks which are just a shade too obvious to be thrilling—notably the motion-picture ghost which slides along the walls—but you get to that state where you are piteously grateful for any little thing which brings it home to you that it is only a play, after all. The management probably had to introduce them to keep the audience from going mad in a body, all over the Thirty-ninth Street Theater.

And the nicest part of the whole thing is that, though guns are produced, there is no shooting—honestly there isn't. It is a comfort to know that before you start, although I always fear when a gun is drawn, even if there are those who have solemnly sworn to me that no

shot is fired, that on the night I am present they will change the script and shoot.

"The Monster" is the work of the extraordinary mind of Mr. Crane Wilbur, who a couple of seasons ago wrote another beautifully creepy affair called "The Ouija Board." Mr. Wilbur is, they tell me, a movie actor, which seems perfectly logical. Working in the movies must surely encourage Sadistic tendencies. I have never seen Mr. Wilbur upon the screen, but I can tender a heartfelt "Attaboy!" to him as a writer of thrillers.

McKay Morris gives a fine performance as the hero, including a backward fall which is one of the big moments of the play, and a series of writhings in the electric chair that just about tear the hearts out of susceptible spectators. Wilton Lackaye is the mad *Doctor Ziska*—they do say that Arnold Daly was slated for the rôle—and enjoys his maniacal moments just a shade too much. Nice, cold, calculating madness is, after all, much more gruelling to the audience's nerves. In his rantings over the strapped and helpless figure of the heroine, Mr. Lackaye elocutes so moistly that it would really be almost more comfortable for the poor girl if he just kept quiet and vivisected her.

There are those ungrateful souls who, after gnawing the arms off their seats while "The Monster" is going on, become courageously critical once they are out in the reassuring lights of Broadway, and complain that there are many flaws in the structure of the play. What do they want for their money, anyway?

The funny thing is that they are the very people who hail "Shore Leave" as a masterpiece of dramatic art, a flawless reflection of life, presumably because Mr. Belasco has provided it with a realistic searchlight in the second act and has seen to it that when the action demands that the actors eat real food is served to them.

"Shore Leave" is the little rascal which the far-famed Wizard of the Drama has selected for his first offering of the glad new season. It is advertised as "a seagoin' comedy," and any time they go leaving off the final g that way, you know what to expect. If it had been produced by some merely mortal manager, it would be just one of those sweet little things you could take Junior and Sister to without being afraid of their getting ideas in their heads. But it was unveiled with all the sacramental solemnity that attends a Belasco production, worshipping crowds hailed it with shouts of acclaim as an epoch in the drama, and at its opening the Wizard himself appeared in his clerical garb, and, with his picturesque head modestly bowed, faltered a few shy words of thanks, overcome by the world's appreciation of his mighty effort.

The author, Hubert Osborne—he once wrote "April," though perhaps it is just as well not to bring that up—has given us, in "Shore Leave," just the quaintest and sweetest and homeliest little play you ever saw in your life. It is all full of whimsies and flashes of charm and sly little touches of hokum. And clean—well, a new pin is positively slimy compared to it. It is one of the cleanest and the most monotonous little things anybody could want to see.

It is all about a little seamstress, who lives alone in a quaint little house, full of Belasco touches, in a New England seaport town. It is all just too Mary E. Wilkins Freeman for anything. Next door live lovable old *Cap'n Martin* and *Aunt Hepzy*, his comedy wife, who are the heroine's aunt and uncle. When she wants to call her uncle she opens the window, letting in a rush of Belasco sunlight, and cries, "Ahoy, cap'n," and then he answers her, "Aho-o-o-y, skip-

per." It is all that way. And my, what a quaint old salt Reginald Barlow makes *Cap'n Martin*! His favorite expletive is, "Minners and mackerel!" and he is incessantly urging people either to avast or to belay—always talking shop, he is. So are the boys of the United States navy, who later come into the plot. You gather that part-singing of chanteys is the principal thing that goes on aboard our battleships.

Almost everybody in the cast, indeed, tears off a few bars of a chantey from time to time, either in full view of the audience or off in the wings. Frances Starr, who plays the seamstress, is constantly trilling bits of sea songs, only resting when she puts a seagoin' record on the phonograph, and lets that relieve her for a few minutes. She also sporadically breaks into hornpipe steps, and frequently announces, in an arch manner, "I'm salty, I'm salty." You can see for yourself, even from just these fleeting glimpses, how awfully nautical the whole thing is. Yet it was not the constant suggestion of the sea half so much as the comedy and the sweetness of the play that was responsible for the slight feeling of seasickness that was with us all during the evening.

There is, though, one great thing about "Shore Leave." That is James Rennie's performance of the rôle of the gob with whom the seamstress falls in love—which is, really, about the only understandable thing that she does. He brings a great, invigorating blast of toughness to the stuffy little comedy. His is an absolutely perfect performance, but it only makes things seem worse when he is off the stage. Miss Starr is exceedingly graceful in the part of the dressmaker. In fact, so graceful is she in her little dance steps, her fluid gestures, her lilting bits of song, that you yearn quietly to crown her.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

WE know a certain distinguished, middle-aged New Yorker, who has, perhaps more than most men, that stamp which unmistakable breed, coupled with sartorial perfection, give to the fortunate one who has one naturally and can afford the other. Few people who meet him casually detect the fact that he is totally blind. Only the telltale, occasional tap of a smart malacca cane reveals to those near him his difficulty. And invariably, when at a crossing he hesitates for further assurance before plunging into the maelstrom of traffic, some sprightly male citizen presents his arm and plays the escort. One day at one of the city's most crowded crossings, conscious of the steady surge of traffic, the man waited patiently, his cane hung jauntily over one arm. Presently the usual kindly tweed arm brushed his hand, and gratefully he slipped his hand under it. Briskly the escort started off. And the blind man was soon aware of following rather uncertainly where the pilot led. There were hysterical gyrations and dodgings hither and yon, with always the whirr of the traffic dining in his ears. But confidently he clung to the arm which was unmistakably leading him across. Then, tentatively stubbing his toe at the curb on the opposite side, he stepped up as the arm was literally torn from under his hand. And a female voice rasped out: "Thank you! But, really, I'd have got over much more comfortably if you hadn't offered your assistance."

JUST another case where the very thing that is calculated to help is perverted in its application to something not so helpful. The instances are legion. They've almost destroyed the kindly impulse on the part of humans all over. Only occasionally is the reverse true—when a thing detrimental in its very essence works as a boomerang for good. Illustrative of the latter, we read a good little story the other day that Arthur Hornblow, Jr., son of the well-known dramatic critic of the same name, had written for AINSLEE's—the familiar chronicle of the actress who with all her talent gets nowhere. Only, in this case, when success looms, another ghastly factor steps in and threatens to submerge her in the professional ranks forever. And the result? Well, read "The Awful Night" in the December number. Here's one of those rare short stories, particularly of the theatrical genre, that is wholly new and different from anything

that's been written before. It is safe to say that if all AINSLEE's readers could read this tale at the same time one mighty guffaw would arise which would rock the foundations of the earth.

IS there any one in this old world, which seems particularly designed for lovers, who doesn't thrill to the touch of romance? We doubt it. But despite its universal popularity, pitifully few are the writers who can weave sheer romance. But there's one who is an adept at it. Fannie Heaslip Lea is perhaps the foremost of the present-day fiction writers who has somewhere garnered the very elusive thing that calls itself romance. And no one has yet surpassed her in the writing down of it. In the December number you will find one of her latest tales. Laid in her colorful Hawaii, "The Angel Lamb" is one of Mrs. Lea's best yet. You will miss a romantic adventure yourself if you don't read this, her latest sortie after the susceptible heart of the male.

IN the same number you will find a remarkable bit of realistic writing by one of AINSLEE's newer and more dramatic writers. Austin Wade has contributed to this number a gripping short story which, far from being of the present popular school of realistic fiction devoted to hideous detail, is none the less a story of stark, searching drama. "Good Hunting" is not of the type of tale that sets out to be viciously cruel and ruthless, but it is a story of bared emotions, eventually justified, however.

THERE is a whole host of AINSLEE's readers unshakably devoted to May Edginton. To them especially the news of her latest serial to appear in AINSLEE's will be an occasion for real satisfaction. And in order not to keep them waiting longer than need be we have decided to launch this latest and best of Miss Edginton's longer tales in the next, the December number. "The Man Hunt" is, we think, the most vital and stirring serial which this author has achieved yet. In the light of her startling success so far in the field of longer fiction this may sound like an extravagant announcement. Judge for yourself when the first installment appears. But it is only fair to remind you that May Edginton's name on our cover means early exhaustion of the issue. Be sure of your copy by ordering now.



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(Ed. ni Brogi)

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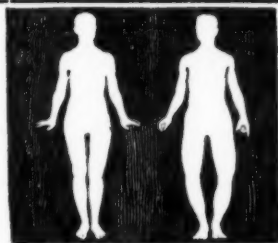
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THE WATERBURY
Radiolite, like the famous
Ingersoll Yankee, leads in its field.
A jeweled watch that combines
stamina and style. The small,
popular 12-size. Graceful from
antique bow to fine, open face
that glows in the dark. Four
jewels. Bridge construction.

Ingersoll Yankee '130

America's most reasonable, reliable, watch is
the best known time-piece in the world.

FREE DIAMOND RING OFFER

Just to advertise our famous Hawaiian Im
diamonds—the greatest discovery the world
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free this 14k gold f. ring, set with a 1-2k
diamond in the diamond-in beautiful ring box
diamonds to cover postage, box, etc. C. O. D.
handling, etc. If you can tell it from a real
diamond return and money refunded. Only
10,000 given away. Send no money. Answer
quick. Send size of finger.

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17c a Day soon pays for a genuine
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60% of Market Price

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This 5/8-1/16 Ct. perfectly cut diamond, a
magnificent solitaire, at \$42.50 among bargains in
our list. See the many big amazing values some as
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in this 78 year oldest largest Diamond Jeweling firm in
the world lends money on diamonds. Thousands of
unpaid loans and other bargains. Must sell NOW.

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Only Gemstone. Post Office Pittsburgh, Pa.



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\$42.50
34-3/16
Carat
Perfectly
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Used by three generations —still 100% gun

The sturdy Stevens shotgun made
its first "kills" in the hands of our
grandfathers. With it our fathers
first experienced the joys of hunting.

And today young men treasure it,
not only for its past, but because
right today, the good old Stevens
still maintains its unbroken record
for hard and straight shooting.

You can buy a more expensive
gun than a Stevens; but you can-
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Shotgun or rifle—a Stevens firearm
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For rifling, Stevens uses a special pro-
cess, slow scraping system removing less
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finished a Stevens barrel is accurate.

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can't shoot loose.

When you buy a Stevens you are buy-
ing unexcelled shooting qualities and you
are paying a reasonable price.

Stevens manufactures a complete
line of small bore rifles and shotguns
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J. STEVENS ARMS COMPANY
Dept. C-127 Chicopee Falls, Mass.
Owned and operated by the Savage
Arms Corporation. Executive and
Export Offices: 50 Church St., N.Y.

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Model 520 Stevens
repeating shotgun—
Stevens made the
first hammerless re-
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STREET & SMITH CORPORATION
79 SEVENTH AVENUE - NEW YORK CITY

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Genuine Diamonds Guaranteed

CASH OR CREDIT

THE BEST CHRISTMAS GIFT OF ALL—A GENUINE DIAMOND. WHY PAY MORE THAN LOFTIS ASKS

We import Diamonds direct from European markets and sell direct to you by mail. Our immense BUYING POWER is a great saving to you.

SEND FOR FREE CATALOG

There are over 2,000 bargains in Diamonds, Watches, Wrist Watches, Pearls, Mesh Bags, Silverware, etc. Select as many articles as you wish and have all charged in one account. Catalog explains everything.

“Sylvia” Diamond Ring here shown, 18-k Solid White Gold, \$75. Wedding Ring, Platinum, \$25; solid gold, \$25. Wrist Watch, 18-k White Gold, 17 J., \$39; 14-k, 16 J., \$32.

17 JEWEL ELGIN—Open Face, Green Gold, engraved, guaranteed 25 years, 12 Size, gilt dial. All sorted patterns. Big value. \$35



Our Diamonds are magnificent blue white, perfect cut, gems, set in Solid Gold and Platinum. Liberty Bonds Accepted.

LOFTIS

BROS. & CO. 1853

THE OLD RELIABLE ORIGINAL CREDIT JEWELERS
DEPT. F-222
108 N. State St., Chicago, Ill.
Stores in Leading Cities

CREDIT TERMS on all articles: One-fifth down, balance divided into equal payments within eight months. Send for Catalog.

High School Course in 2 Years

You can complete this simplified High School course at home in the least possible time. This and thirty-six other practical courses are described in our Free Bulletin. Write for it TODAY.

AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. H. 576 Drexel Ave. & 68th St. CHICAGO

Three Talented Artists Joined in Designing This Lamp



The lines, proportions and coloring of most of the lamps you see in these days of commercialism are the work of designing departments of large factories. They are the fruits of a deep knowledge of what makes a “popular seller” in the stores. But this exquisite little lamp—“Aurora” as it has been named by an artist because of the purity of its Greek lines—was designed by the united talents of an architect and interior decorator, a painter, and a sculptress, who were working not to make a “big seller” for the stores, but solely to design a lamp of truly artistic proportions, with real grace, symmetry and beauty yet of great practicality.

The price of this artistic gem is \$3.50. Think of it! In the few shops where lamps of this character can be found its equal would cost from \$15 to \$20. Only the Decorative Arts League could offer such a price and such a lamp.

“Aurora” is 16 inches high, base and cap cast in solid Medallium, shaft of seamless brass, finished either in rich statuary bronze with adjustable parchment shade of neutral brown or in ivory white, shade golden yellow. Inside of shades old rose to give mellow light. Equipped for electricity, wire socket, etc., everything but bulb. Send no money, simply sign and mail the coupon to Decorative Arts League, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York.

DECORATIVE ARTS LEAGUE, (B.L.)
175 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Send me at the League members' special price, an “Aurora” Lamp, and I will pay postman \$3.50 plus the postage when delivered. (Shipping weight only 5 lbs.) If not satisfactory I can return lamp within five days and you are to refund my money.

Check finish desired—Statuary Bronze ☐ or Ivory White ☐

Signed _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____

COMPLETE NOVEL

(OVER 100,000 WORDS)

BY

B. M. Bower

IN THE

October 10th Issue

PEOPLE'S STORY MAGAZINE

20c per copy

At your news dealer

Gibson Instruments

Mandolin, Mandola, Mando-Cello, Guitar, Tenor-Banjo, Mandolin-Banjo, Cello-Banjo, Guitar-Banjo, Harp-Guitar, Mando-Bass —



Easy to Play Easy to Pay

Select your Gibson now. You can soon be playing the music of the great. Your friends will be surprised and delightedly entertained. Let us help you organize a Gibson Orchestra in your community. You can increase your popularity, income and pleasure by playing for Concerts, Entertainments, Church Affairs, etc. A small down payment and then \$4 a month will soon pay for a Gibson and will furnish you with the most liberal allowance on a Gibson. Write for Free Book, Catalog, Free Trial Offer, information about Wm. Place, Jr. Book and instrument you prefer.

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1050 Pershing Street Kalamazoo, Mich., U. S. A.

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Classified Advertising

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MEN—Age 17 to 35. Experience unnecessary. Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 114, St. Louis.

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Travel. Excellent opportunities. Experience unnecessary. Particulars free. Write, American Detective System, 1968 Broadway, N. Y.

WE START YOU IN BUSINESS, furnishing everything; men and women \$30 to \$100 weekly, operating our "Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Booklet free. W. Hilper Hagsdale, Drawer 29, East Orange, N. J.

AGENTS, \$60 to \$200 a Week. Free Samples. Gold Sign Letters for Store and Office Windows. Any one can do it. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 4511 N. Clark St., Chicago.

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR! \$110 to \$250 monthly, expenses paid after 3 months' spare-time study. Splendid opportunities. Position guaranteed or money refunded. Write for Free Booklet C-28, Stand. Business Training Inst., Buffalo, N. Y.

GOV'T RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS start \$125 month; expenses paid. Send examination questions free. Columbus Institute, B-3, Columbus, Ohio.

SHIRT manufacturer wants agents; sell advertised brand men's shirts direct to wearer. No capital or experience required. Free samples. Madison Mills, 565 Broadway, New York.

BECOME A RAILWAY MAIL CLERK. \$135 to \$195 a month. Examination soon. Write today for free catalog. Patterson Civil Service School, Desk C-9811, Rochester, N. Y.

BE A DETECTIVE. Excellent opportunity, good pay, travel. Write C. T. Ludwig, 486 Westover Building, Kansas City, Mo.

AGENTS—Johnson cleared \$137.00 last week selling Jiffy Chang. Sigma. Every merchant buys. Fastest seller made. Costs 25c, sells \$1.00. Sample prepaid—25c. Peoples Portrait, Dept. G, 566 W. Randolph, Chicago.

BIG MONEY AND FAST SALES. Every owner buys gold initials for his auto. You charge \$1.50, make \$1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples. American Monogram Co., Dept. 170, East Orange, N. J.

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GOVERNMENT RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS—commence \$135 month. List positions open—free. Write immediately. Franklin Institute, Dept. J2, Rochester, N. Y.

SELL US YOUR SPARE TIME. You can earn Fifteen to Fifty Dollars weekly writing checkcards at home. No canvassing. Pleasant, profitable profession, easily, quickly learned by our simple graphic block system. Artistic ability unnecessary. We instruct and supply work. Wilson Methods, Limited, Dept. 22, 64 East Richmond, Toronto, Canada.

Help Wanted—Female

\$6—\$18 a dozen decorating pillow tops at home, experience unnecessary; particulars for stamp. Tapestry Paint Co., 116 La-Grange, Ind.

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INVENTORS desiring to secure patents should write for our guide-book "How To Get Your Patent." Send sketch or description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., Dept. 412, Washington, D. C.

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INVENTIONS WANTED. Cash or royalty for ideas. Adam Fisher Mfg. Co., 223, St. Louis, Mo.

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AUTOMOBILE Mechanics, Owners, Garagesmen, Repairmen, send for free copy America's Popular Motor Magazine. Contains helpful instructive information on overhauling, ignition wiring, carburetors, batteries, etc. Automobile Digest, 536 Butler Bldg., Cincinnati.

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WRITE NEWS ITEMS and Short Stories for pay in spare time. Copyright Book and plans free. Press Reporting Syndicate (466), St. Louis, Mo.

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BIG MONEY IN WRITING photoplays, stories, poems, songs. Send today for free copy America's leading writer's magazine, full of helpful advice on writing and selling. Writer's Digest, 665 Butler Building, Cincinnati.

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AUTHORS: FREE BOOK on Photoplay writing and marketing. Successful Photoplays, Box 43, Des Moines, Ia.

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CELESTIAL INCENSE is made for those who want the genuine Oriental fragrance. An exclusive product; mild, soothing and absolutely pure. 50c post-paid. De Forest, 127 Second Street, Newark, N. J.

Songs, Poems, etc.

SONGWRITERS! Learn of the public's demand for songs suitable for dancing and the opportunities greatly changed conditions offer new writers, obtainable only in our "Songwriters Manual & Guide" sent free. Submit your ideas for songs at once for free criticism and advice. We revise poems, compose music, secure copyright and facilitate free publication or outright sale of songs. Knickerbocker Studios, 304 Galety Bldg., New York.

WONDERFUL PROPOSITION for song poem or melody writers. Ask Hildebrand, D-102, 4040 Dickens Ave., Chicago.

WRITE THE WORDS FOR A SONG. We compose music. Our Chief of Staff wrote many big song-hits. Submit your song-poem to us at once. New York Melody Corp., 402 Fitzgerald Bldg., New York.

YOU write the words for a song. We'll compose the music free and publish same. Send song-poem to-day. B. Lenox Co., 21 W. 125th St., New York.

\$500.00 PRIZE CONTEST. If you write the best third verse for our song "Rampy Army" you will receive \$500. Send your name and we shall send you free the contest rules and words of this song. World Corp., 245 W. 47th St., Dept. 6782, New York.

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ST-STU-T-T-TERING And Stammering Cured At Home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDunnell, 80 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

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TYPEWRITERS. All Makes. Save one-half. Thoroughly rebuilt in our factory by the famous "Young Process." Fully guaranteed. Free trial. We handle all standard makes. Cash or easy terms. Write for catalog. Young Typewriter Co., Dept. 46, Chicago, Ill.

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Miscellaneous

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CASH for Old Gold, Platinum, Silver, Diamonds, Liberty Bonds, War Bonds, Unused Postage Stamps, False Teeth, Manetio Points, Jobs, any valuables. Mail in today. Cash sent, return mail. Goods returned in ten days if you're not satisfied. Ohio Smelting Co., 302 Hippodrome Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Deformities of the Back

Thousands of Remarkable Cases



An old lady, 72 years of age, who suffered for many years and was absolutely helpless, found relief. A man who was helpless, unable to rise from his chair, was riding horseback and playing tennis within a year. A little child, paralyzed, was playing about the house after wearing a Philo Burt Appliance three weeks. We have successfully treated more than 45,000 cases the past 20 years.

30 Days' Trial Free

We will prove its value in your own case. There is no reason why you should not accept our offer. The photographs show how light, cool, elastic and easily adjusted the Philo Burt Appliance is—how different from the old torturous plaster, leather or steel jackets.

Every sufferer with a weakened or deformed spine owes it to himself to investigate thoroughly. Price within reach of all.

Send For Our Free Book.

If you will describe the case it will send us in giving you definite information at once.

PHILO BURT MFG. CO.
108-23 Odd Fellows Temple
JAMESTOWN, N. Y.



Every Girl Can Have A
BRACELET WATCH

Absolutely



FREE

No reason for anybody to be without one. Just send us your name and address and we will tell you how you can get one of these 7-jewel, 10-yr. guaranteed, gold filled Bracelet Watches. Comes in elaborate velvet box.

RUSH your name and address and we will tell you how to get this Bracelet Watch **ABSOLUTELY FREE**.

HOME SUPPLY CO.
116 Madison St. Dept. 88 New York City

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Restricted Free-Action
Grand Medal.

STUART'S LAPAO-PADS are different from trusses, being medicine applicators made self-adhesive purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. No straps, buckles or spring attached—cannot slip, pin, chafe or press against the public bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered.



Grand Prize.

Sold as velvet—easy to apply—expensive. Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prize. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Lapao absolutely **FREE**.

Write name on Coupon and send **TODAY**. **FREE**
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Name.....
Address.....

Return mail will bring Free Trial Lapao.....

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Let DIAMONDS say Merry Xmas



642 AD—18" Pearls, Diamond Clasp. \$14.50



643 AD—Premier diamond Ring. \$95.00



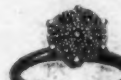
644 AD—Engraved Diamond \$37.50



645AD Hexagon diamond Ring. \$55.00



651 AD—Platinum D. 15-jwl. Ring. \$118.50



649AD—Premier Cluster, 7 dia., \$73.50



653AD—W. G. Cluster, Dia., \$59.50



652AD—14 kt. Wh. Gold 15-jwl. Wrist Watch \$33.65



654AD—Blue-white, Dia. Kg., \$110.00



647AD—Belcher Dia. Ring. \$80.00

NO MONEY DOWN

THE starting Diamond values pictured can be yours without risking a single penny. Each item is ideally suited for a charming Christmas gift. Your selection sent on your simple request without a single penny down. If you don't agree that it is the biggest bargain you ever seen, return at our expense. If you like it, pay at the rate of only a few cents a day.

YEARLY DIVIDEND

You are guaranteed:
Per Cent. yearly increase in value on all diamond exchanges; also Per Cent. bonus privilege.

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In Business Nearly 100 years

Send for your copy today to Dept. 1928. See the greatest display of diamond and jewelry bargains in America for yourself sold under the Lyon Charge Account Plan.

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Commencing the greatest story ever written by

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FREDERICK MOORE**

Other Good Stories

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Ladies' ring is an exquisite hand-pierced model. Solid 20 Karat White Gold—Looks and wears like Platinum. **Gentleman's ring** is a handsome octagon design—Solid 14 Karat Green Gold with 18 Karat White Gold Top.

Solid 14 Kt. White Gold **17 Jewels Highly Adjusted** **\$33.75**
\$35.00

This beautiful Wrist Watch cannot be duplicated less than \$45. Fully Guaranteed.

FREE De Luxe Xmas Catalog. Hundreds of Money Saving Values in Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry Illustrated. **TERMS: One-Fifth Down—Balance Eight Months.** Diamond of Merit from \$15 to \$1,000.

Write Dept. E. K.

Est. 32 Years

AMERICAN WATCH & JEWELRY CO.
6 MAIDEN LANE NEW YORK



SEND NO MONEY
If You Can Tell it from a GENUINE DIAMOND Send it back

To prove our blue-white MEXICAN DIAMOND cannot be told from a GENUINE DIAMOND and has same DAZZLING RAINBOW FIRE, we will send a selected 1 carat gem in Ladies Solitaire Ring. Cat. price \$5.50 for Half Price to introduce, \$2.63, or in Gentle Heavy Tooth Belcher Ring (Cat. Price \$5.50) for \$2.58. Our finest 1.5 Gold Filled mountings. GUARANTEED 20 YEARS. SEND NO MONEY. Just mail postcard or this ad, State Size. We will mail at once. When ring arrives deposit \$1.00 for Ladies ring or \$0.50 for Gentle w/ h postman. If not pleased return in 5 days for money back less handling charges. Write for Free catalog. Agents Wanted. **MEXICAN DIAMOND IMPORTING CO., Dept. AR Las Cruces, N. Mex.** (Exclusive control over Mexican Diamonds)

\$2 Brings This Genuine DIAMOND PLATINUM RING



SEND ONLY \$2.00 and this hand carved and pierced ring of Solid Platinum set with a brilliant blue white, perfect cut, first quality Diamond comes to you charges paid.

10 DAYS' Free Trial

Keep the ring ten days. If not satisfactory or if you can duplicate this value anywhere for less than \$50.00, your deposit will be returned to you. After trial pay balance \$5.30 a month for ten months. Price \$65.00.

FREE—Write today for Royal catalog of Diamonds, Watches and Jewelry. Thousands of gift suggestions shown in our \$2,000,000 stock. **Ten months to pay on everything.** Address Dept. 622.

ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO.
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WANTED! RAILWAY MAIL CLERKS

Examinations soon. \$1600 to \$2300 a year. Steady life-time job. Common education sufficient.

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Sms: Send me without charge your Catalog, describing this and other U. S. Government positions.

PATTERSON CIVIL SERVICE SCHOOL
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Name.....
Address.....

You Have a Beautiful Face—But Your Nose?

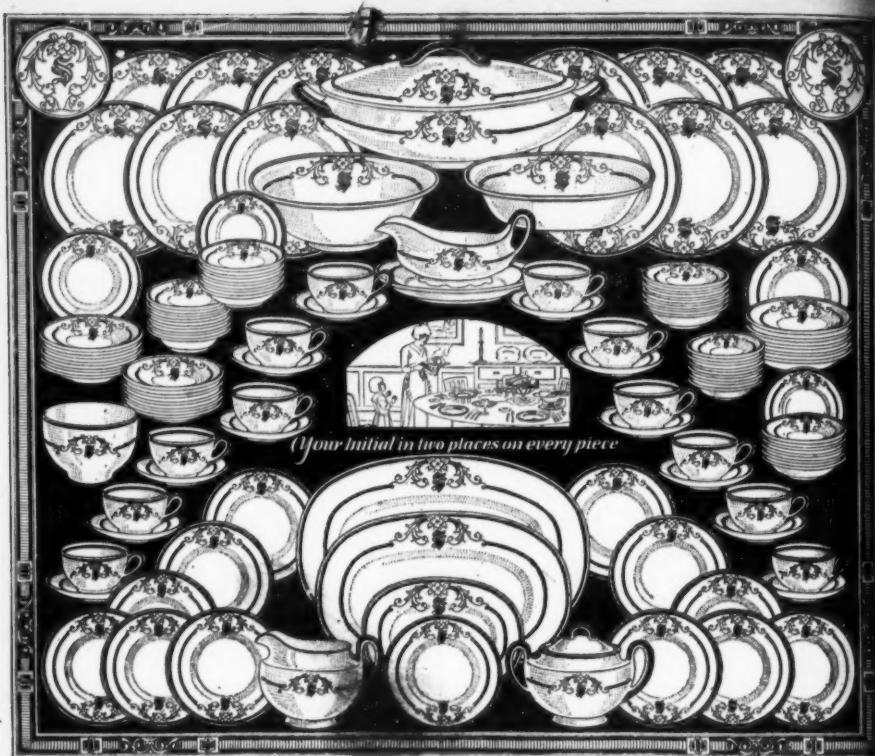
IN THIS DAY and AGE attention to your appearance is an absolute necessity if you expect to make the most out of life. Not only should you wish to appear as attractive as possible, for your own self-satisfaction, which is alone well worth your efforts, but you will find the world in general judging you greatly, if not wholly, by your "looks," therefore it pays to "look your best" at all times. Permit no one to see you looking otherwise; it will injure your welfare! Upon the impression you constantly make rests the failure or success of your life. Which is to be your ultimate destiny? My latest **Nose-Shaper, "Trados Model 25,"** U. S. Patent, with six adjustable pressure regulators and made of light polished metal, corrects now ill-shaped noses without operation, quickly, safely and permanently. Disenanced cases excepted. Is pleasant and does not interfere with one's daily occupation, being worn at night.

Write today for free booklet, which tells you how to correct Ill-Shaped Noses without cost if not satisfactory.

M. TRILETY, Face Specialist, 1780 Ackerman Bldg., BINGHAMTON, N. Y.

Also For Sale at Riker-Hegeman, Liggett's and other First-Class Drug Stores.

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This Superb 110-piece Set, with your initial in gold, surrounded by a wreath of gold, in 2 places on every piece; decorated in blue and gold with gold covered handles; consists of:
12 Dinner Plates, 9 inches
12 Breakfast Plates, 7 inches

12 Cups
12 Saucers
12 Soup Plates, 7 1/4 inches
12 Cereal Dishes, 6 inches
12 Fruit Dishes, 5 1/4 inches
12 Individual Bread and Butter Plates, 6 1/4 inches

1 Platter, 13 1/4 inches
1 Platter, 11 1/4 inches
1 Celery Dish, 8 1/4 inches
1 Sauce Boat Tray, 7 1/4 inches
1 Butter Plate, 10 inches
1 Vegetable Dish, 10 1/2 inches, with lid (2 pieces)

1 Deep Bowl, 8 1/4 inches
1 Oval Baker, 9 inches
1 Small Deep Bowl, 5 inches
1 Gravy Boat, 7 1/4 inches
1 Creamer
1 Sugar Bowl with cover (3 pieces)

Brings This COMPLETE 110-Piece Blue and Gold Decorated Dinner Set

Send only \$1.00 and Hartman will ship the complete set of 110 fine pieces. Use it as your own for 30 days on free trial. Then if not satisfied for any reason whatever, send it back and Hartman will return your \$1.00 and pay transportation charges both ways. If you keep it, TAKE NEARLY A YEAR TO PAY—a little every month.

Your Initial in Gold, Surrounded by a Wreath of Gold, in 2 Places on Every Piece Gold Covered Handles

Every piece decorated with a rich gold band edge, a mazarine blue follow band and two pure gold initials in Old English design, surrounded by gold wreaths. Beautiful white lustrous body, made of best domestic and imported kaoline. 110 wonderful pieces. An opportunity you must not miss. Send coupon and \$1.00 today.

"Let Hartman Feather YOUR Nest"

Order No. 320DDMAY16, Bargain Price \$24.95. Pay \$1 now. Balance \$2.50 monthly.

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
Dept. 4935 Chicago, Illinois

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FREE Bargain Catalog

368 pages of bargains in furniture, rugs, stoves, silverware, washing machines, kitchen ware, gas engines and cream separators, etc.—all sold on our easy monthly terms and 30 days' free trial. Post card or letter brings it free.

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
Dept. 4935 Chicago, Ill.

I enclose \$1.00. Send 110-piece Blue and Gold Decorated Dinner Set No. 320DDMAY16. I am to have 30 days' free trial. If not satisfied, will ship it back and you will return my \$1.00 and pay transportation charges both ways. If I keep it, I will pay \$2.50 per month until full price, \$24.95, is paid. Title remains with you until final payment is made.

Name _____
Street Address _____
R. F. D. _____ Box No. _____
Town _____ State _____
State Your Occupation and Color _____
Give Initial Wanted (Any One Letter) _____

\$1

Important!

Hartman guarantees that every piece in this set is absolutely first quality—no "seconds." This is a standard or "open" pattern. Replacement pieces may be had of us for three years. Each piece wrapped in tissue paper. Excellent packing to prevent breakage. Shipped at once.



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Of course they're smart! They're Kumapart!
 Impress this name on your memory - Kum-
a-part - the buy word for buttons of supreme
 convenience for soft cuffs, and for the belt
 buckle that snaps and can't slip. We've die-
 stamped this name on the back of every but-
 ton and buckle. It may be there if you don't
 look but it's wiser to make sure

WRITE FOR
 STYLE BOOK 28
 WITH
 CORRECT DRESS
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IN GOLD, SILVER
 & PLATINUM AT
 JEWELERS' IN
 POPULAR QUAL-
 ITIES AT MENS
 SHOPS

The Baer & Wilde Co
 in the city of
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 state of
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Chesterfield

CIGARETTES



Taste is a matter of
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We state it as our honest belief that the tobaccos used in Chesterfield are of finer quality (and hence of better taste) than in any other cigarette at the price.

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.

They Satisfy

Of finest Turkish and Domestic tobaccos - blend

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